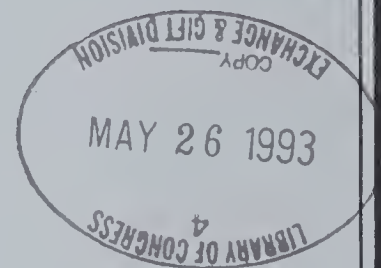






**ASSESSMENT OF
INFLUENCE EXERTED ON
MILITARY OPERATIONS
BY OTHER THAN
MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS**



GENERAL W. B. ROSSON
Commander in Chief
United States Army, Pacific



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REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

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MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Manuscript

1. The enclosed manuscript, "Assessment of Influence Exerted on Military Operations by Other than Military Considerations," is provided for inclusion in your collection. This 1970 study was completed under the direction of the Commander, U.S. Army Pacific, General W.B. Rosson, for then Chief of Staff of the Army, General William C. Westmoreland.

2. This study contains a wealth of information about the prosecution of the Vietnam War. Of particular use are the citations to primary sources in the notes. The manuscript is, however, a reflection of the era in which it was prepared. Used within this context it should be a valuable tool for researchers.

Encl

HAROLD W. NELSON
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History

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PREFACE

(U) In a letter to the author dated 9 November 1970, the Chief of Staff, United States Army stated:

" . . . I have been concerned about a serious deficiency in the authoritative accounts of certain events or series of events concerning the United States Army in Vietnam -- accounts that will assist the Army in its development of future operational concepts and provide reference material for a comprehensive historical record.

"An assessment of the influence exerted on military operations by other than military considerations has not been fully documented. . . ."

To "correct the deficiency" the author was tasked to prepare the assessment cited above. This monograph responds to that tasking.

(U) In terms of scope, the assessment reflects the following guidance furnished by the Chief of Staff:

This monograph should provide an assessment of the effect of nonmilitary considerations on military operations with particular attention to those which tend to have a negative effect and to methods employed in minimizing their effect. Of prime consideration will be a discussion of the Rules of Engagement that have governed the actions of United States, Free World Military Assistance Forces, and Government of Vietnam forces within the Republic of Vietnam and along its borders. The account should include the problems of unit commanders in securing clearances to fire, conditions affecting actions on the borders and within Cambodia and Laos, and the ranging scale of actions and counteractions that can be conducted within and north of the Demilitarized Zone. A focal point will be the limited incursion into Cambodia

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and the effect of the conditions imposed upon the participants, to include prior proposals for similar operations. The account should also describe the effects on United States and allied forces of the observance of ceasefires. Treatment should be given to the changing policies governing the use of air power, including restrictions on the use of B-52's in South Vietnam until June 1965, the 37-day halt in air attacks north of the Demilitarized Zone beginning in December 1965, the partial limitation of air strikes in March of 1966 [1968], and the complete bombing halt in North Vietnam in October of 1968. Other factors that should be taken into account are the Buddhist uprising in 1966, the prisoner of war issue, limitations in command and control of third country forces, the effect of anti-war sentiment in the United States, and the effect of coverage of the war by the news media. The monograph should close with a discussion of troop reductions.

(U) Organizationally, requirements established by the Chief of Staff's guidance are fulfilled by nine chapters:

- I. Rules of Engagement
- II. Free World Military Assistance Forces
- III. The Buddhist Uprising in 1966
- IV. Effect of Truces on US and Allied Operations
- V. Policies Governing the Use of Air Power
- VI. Prior Proposals for and the Limited Incursion into Cambodia
- VII. Prisoner of War Issue
- VIII. Reduction of US Forces
- IX. Summary of Conclusions

(U) In relation to time frame, the monograph encompasses the decade 1961-71. Prime focus, however, is on the period mid-1964 through 1970.

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(U) As a final point, it is to be stressed that the assessment contained herein is selective in scope, relies extensively on the author's experience and judgment, and is limited in some cases by non-availability of highly sensitive reference data.

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CHAPTER I

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (U)

PURPOSE

(U) This chapter examines the effect of nonmilitary considerations on rules of engagement (ROE) applicable to the war in Southeast Asia (SEA).

APPROACH

(U) Evolution of ROE will be related to:

- The United States (US) advisory effort from 1961 to 1965;
- Activity of US forces from 1965 to 1971; and
- Border areas and the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

(U) Discussion will include:

- Sequential development of ROE;
- Impact of ROE on military operations; and
- Attempts by Commander, United States Military Assistance

Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) to modify ROE in the interest of increased operational effectiveness.

(U) ROE affecting employment of air power in North Vietnam (NVN), Laos and Cambodia, plus those relating specifically to B-52's, are addressed in Chapter V - "Policies Governing the Use of Air Power."

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BACKGROUND

(U) ROE are directives issued by a US military authority that delineate the circumstances and limitations under which US forces will engage other forces.¹

(U) The US observes and enforces the policies of the 1907 Hague and 1949 Geneva Conventions. These policies are enumerated in Department of Army Field Manual 27-10, "The Law of Land Warfare," dated 18 July 1956 (also referred to as "the rules of land warfare").²

(U) The Geneva Conference of 1954, convened to restore peace in Indochina, provided the initial source of many of the ROE promulgated by US authorities. That conference:

- Created the states of Cambodia, Laos and "the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam" - now the Republic of Vietnam (RVN);

- Prohibited introduction of troop reinforcements, additional military personnel and advanced weaponry;

- Established a "provisional military demarcation line" (PMDL) at the 17th parallel as the basis for regroupment of Viet Minh forces north of the parallel and French-supported State of Vietnam forces south of the parallel;

- Established a DMZ five kilometers wide on either side of the demarcation line as a buffer zone.³

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(U) Although not a signatory, the US later declared that it would refrain from the use of any force in SEA that might disturb the Geneva accords. The US added it would view any renewal of aggression with grave concern, as a serious threat to international peace and security.⁴

(S-NOFORN) ROE in a counterinsurgency environment are necessarily sensitive since battle lines usually are not clearly defined. In warfare of the type being waged within the RVN, winning of the people is of utmost importance. Victory over major enemy forces can be offset by unintentional injuries or deaths among the RVN civilian population.⁵

(U) ROE adopted by the US in Vietnam have gone considerably beyond those necessary in past wars because of the:

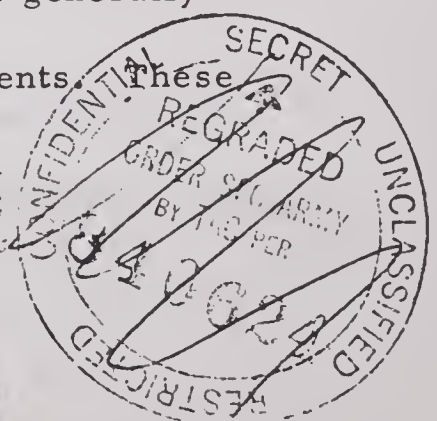
- Insurgent nature of the conflict;
- Urgent and complicated task of protection of noncombatants;
- Requirement to avoid international incidents;
- Desire of the US to limit the area of operations; and
- Need to control the intensity of the conflict.

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(TS) Concurrent with granting of authority to use or expand use of military means, the US administration, acting through the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), imposed rules generally intended to limit the war and to avoid international incidents. These included:

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- Restrictions on operations in border areas;
- Restrictions applicable to the DMZ; and
- Restrictions on surface and air-delivered fires.

(TS) COMUSMACV translated this guidance into specific ROE for the ground war, tactical air operations and naval operations under his jurisdiction.⁶ Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) established ROE for remaining air and naval operations. COMUSMACV and his subordinate elements also published detailed implementing instructions since procedures involved in the application of ROE "on the firing line" necessarily required additional safety measures or control mechanisms. In practice, each lower command level found it necessary to add safety measures to insure a relatively high degree of assurance of compliance with the intent of ROE directives.⁷

(U) The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) and Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) were not specifically bound by US ROE; however, COMUSMACV took positive action to encourage and obtain their compliance, as he did in the case of RVN civilian authorities.⁸

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ROE, 1961-1965

(U) From the US point of view, US military assistance provided prior to the introduction of US ground combat forces early in 1965 was

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subject to the laws of warfare and US initiated ROE. Accordingly, the mission of advising and training RVNAF made it necessary to place severe operational restrictions upon US personnel and operations. Advisors and others in positions of influence encouraged RVNAF to comply both with the written and unwritten rules of warfare and ROE relative to:

- Air operations;
- Inland waterways;
- Herbicide operations (defoliation and crop destruction); and
- Riot control agents (RCA).⁹

Air Operations

(S) In November 1961, the United States Air Force (USAF) began in-country air training of Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) personnel in USAF aircraft under the JUNGLE JIM program. JUNGLE JIM aircraft carried VNAF markings and were specifically prohibited from engaging in combat. In December of that year, however, the JCS relaxed the rules and permitted JUNGLE JIM T-28 aircraft to fly combat/training missions under a new program entitled FARM GATE provided:

- Combined US/VNAF crews were aboard the aircraft;
- VNAF lacked the capability to accomplish the mission on its

own;

- Aircraft were based in-country;

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- Aircraft were of the same type (T-28) as flown by the VNAF, to include VNAF markings; and

- The purpose of the combat mission was to train the VNAF to perform all missions at an early date.¹⁰

(S) Within this framework Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Directive Number 62, dated 24 November 1962, governed employment of US aircraft on combat support (operational) missions. In addition to the FARM GATE restrictions, the directive applied the following rules:

- No US personnel and/or aircraft (USAF) could undertake combat support missions unless these were beyond the capability of the VNAF;

- United States Army (USA) CH-21C and United States Marine Corps (USMC) UH-34D transport helicopters, identified by US markings and manned by US personnel, could be armed for defensive purposes only, could return fire if fired upon but could not initiate fire;

- USA UH-1 helicopters, identified by US markings and manned by combined US and RVN crews, could return fire if fired upon or if any aircraft they were escorting were fired upon, but could not initiate fire;

- US air crews could engage any attacker with any means available; and

- US aircraft normally could not approach closer to the Cambodian border than three miles with good visibility and five miles with reduced visibility.

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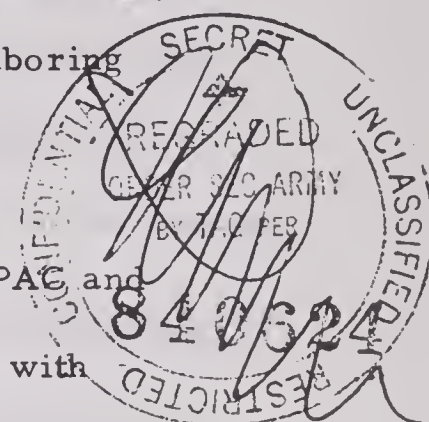
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VNAF ROE addressed only the overflying of borders of neighboring countries.¹¹

(TS) On 16 February 1963, the JCS commented to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV that the MACV directive was more restrictive with respect to rotary wing aircraft than was intended. The JCS clarified the intent by specifically authorizing US rotary wing aircraft to initiate fire against clearly identified Viet Cong (VC) elements considered a threat to the aircraft or its passengers.¹²

(S) In connection with control of fixed wing aircraft, the 2d Air Division at Tan Son Nhut (ultimately redesignated 7th Air Force), established a buffer zone along the Cambodian border of five miles during daylight and ten miles at night. Additionally, it required FARM GATE crews to conduct strikes under control of a VNAF forward air controller (FAC) or a C-47 flareship that provided a radio link between RVNAF contingents on the ground and strike air crews.¹³

(S-NOFORN) An incident indicative of ROE limitations occurred on the night of 10 September 1963, when Soc Trang airfield came under VC mortar attack. Within five minutes, after the first mortar rounds impacted, four USAF pilots flying T-28's were airborne. They notified the air operations center (AOC) at Tan Son Nhut of the attack and asked for a flareship and additional fighters. During Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) counter mortar fires, the pilots expended their ordnance



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on flashes that appeared to be VC positions. Immediately following the air strike the VC withdrew. The Commander of the 34th Tactical Group commended his pilots for their aggressiveness; however, he pointed out that such action was in violation of the ROE since:

- There were no VNAF crew members on board, no FAC and no flareship. Moreover,

- There was no way of "positively" identifying the target.¹⁴

(S-NOFORN) Another example of lack of positive target identification occurred in II Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) when USA helicopters fired in support of an outpost under attack at night. COMUSMACV stated his "concern that . . . US pilots conducted . . . firing against ground targets . . . without communications with the ground forces . . . without prior arrangement or briefing . . ." ¹⁵

(S) The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) provided further ROE guidance on 20 May 1964 relative to both aircraft and advisory operations. He stated that commencing with initiation of US participation in counter-insurgency action in South Vietnam, it had been the policy of the US Government that US military personnel would not take part in combat. This policy was reaffirmed with the following exceptions:

- FARM GATE aircraft were authorized to continue close air support subject to the condition that they fly bona fide operational training missions against hostile targets to prepare participating VNAF

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personnel for eventual replacement of US pilots. The ultimate objective was stated to be elimination of the requirement for FARM GATE aircraft.

- US helicopters would continue to transport RVNAF personnel into combat but their weapons were for the protection of the aircraft and its passengers only. Fire from armed helicopters would not be used as a substitute for close support air strikes.

- US advisors to RVNAF units were to be exposed to combat only as required in the execution of their advisory duties.¹⁶

(TS) The Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964 ushered in a new phase of the war. As a result, jet aircraft -- B-57's, F-100's and F-102's -- with US markings were introduced into the RVN that month. These were considered necessary because of the possibility of further US retaliatory strikes and the possibility of a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) invasion of RVN through the DMZ.¹⁷

(TS) Within this setting VC terrorism directed against US personnel and installations increased:

- Bien Hoa Air Base was attacked on 31 October 1964, five B-57 aircraft were destroyed, four US personnel were killed and thirty wounded; and

- A bachelor officer quarters -- the Brink, in Saigon -- was the target of a bombing on 25 December 1964, resulting in two US killed and

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108 US and Vietnamese personnel wounded.

These incidents caused COMUSMACV, the US Ambassador to the RVN, CINCPAC and the JCS to recommend immediate US reprisal strikes. No such strikes were authorized.¹⁸

(U) Also in 1964, Hanoi began to supply VC forces with a modern family of small arms and additional supporting arms to improve their combat capability quantitatively and qualitatively. This assistance culminated in introduction of regular NVA troops, including one confirmed regimental sized unit.¹⁹

(TS) Meanwhile, on 24 August 1964, COMUSMACV had requested CINCPAC and the JCS approval of a change in ROE for FARM GATE to permit:

- Aircraft to engage targets in self-defense without presence of a FAC;
- Missions with an VNAF observer aboard instead of the mandatorily required VNAF student pilot; and
- Response to requests for immediate support without VNAF personnel aboard.²⁰

(S) The JCS on 14 October 1964, in approving only a portion of the request, authorized either a VNAF student pilot or observer to be aboard. They went on to suggest that if the ROE with this change still inhibited full utilization of fixed-wing aircraft, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV should

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provide additional justification for further relaxations in relation to FARM GATE.²¹

(C) The crux of the problem concerning ROE for fixed-wing aircraft was the shortage of VNAF student pilots and observers. Frequently, neither was available when needed, and response to normal air support requests was delayed or aborted accordingly. Inevitably, ROE violations resulted from pressure to provide critically needed support regardless of non-availability of VNAF personnel.²²

Inland Waterways

(TS) Agreements reached at the Geneva Conference of 1954 had guaranteed free navigation on the Mekong River and its navigable tributaries, e.g., the Bassac River, by Laos, Cambodia, the State of Vietnam and those nations recognized diplomatically by these three countries. Because the VC were utilizing the Mekong and Bassac Rivers for infiltration, the JCS recommended that the Government of Vietnam (GVN) be encouraged to apply controls on traffic using these waterways. The GVN responded by instituting a measure of control; however, in order to keep within the principles stipulated in the protocols of the Geneva Conference as well as to comply with international law, the onus was placed more on customs officials than military means to obtain desired results.²³

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Herbicide Operations

(U) Use of herbicides for defoliation and crop destruction prior to 1965 called for positive controls because of world-wide sensitivity to the use of chemicals in war and need to safeguard the RVN food supply.

(S) Three basic herbicides were used:

- ORANGE, composed of dichlorophenoxyacetic and trichlorophenoxyacetic acids, was used both on broad-leaf vegetation and on mixed broad-leaf and grass-type targets. It was best suited for use in Vietnam.

- WHITE, composed of trichloropicolinic and dichlorophenoxyacetic acids, was most effective against broad-leaf vegetation. Because of its low volatility, it was used on targets where the spray area boundary was critical.

- BLUE, a water-base desiccant composed of sodium cacodylate and dimethylarsinic acids, was used primarily for grass-type targets.²⁴

(S) All of these chemicals are used commercially in the US. In 1968, for example, approximately 250 million acres were treated in the US, while use in RVN never exceeded a million acres in any one year.²⁵

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(S) In July 1961, the Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (CHMAAGV) suggested that herbicides might be used to:

- Improve visibility along communications routes; and
- Deny the enemy a source of food.

Missions to test and evaluate this concept were initiated with US and RVN governmental approval in August 1961, to clear the jungle along Route 13 in Binh Long Province, an area wherein definite military advantage could be gained from defoliation.²⁶

(S) Testing and evaluation continued until May 1962, tightly controlled and restricted by both the US Departments of State and Defense. Recognizing that defoliation was the less sensitive of the two proposed uses of herbicides, authority to conduct defoliation missions was delegated to the US Ambassador and COMUSMACV in May 1962. State and Defense specified, however, that:

- No crop destruction operations were to be initiated; and
- Defoliation would be limited to clearing roadsides, powerlines, railroads and other lines of communication (LOC).²⁷

(S) In some cases, the authority granted to COMUSMACV and the Ambassador to defoliate involved an unacceptable delay from time of request by field units to implementation of aerial spraying operations. In response to a COMUSMACV request in January 1964,

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the US senior advisor to each ARVN division was authorized to initiate hand-spray defoliation operations.²⁸ By the summer of 1964, defoliation had become a routine practice to enhance security of military installations and LOC by reducing concealment available to VC forces and by improving fields of fire.²⁹

(S) During the period under discussion research of crop destruction techniques had been undertaken even though political sensitivity as well as natural aversion to destruction of food resources held back approval of crop destruction operations. By the summer of 1962, both US and RVNAF military commanders were advocating destruction of enemy crops on a selective basis. The issue of whether enemy crops could be distinguished from friendly crops led President Kennedy to seek political assurance from the GVN on 25 September 1962 that the:

- "GVN could differentiate between Viet Cong crops and Montagnard crops;" and that

- "Usefulness of such an exercise would outweigh the propaganda effect of communist accusations that the US was indulging in food warfare."³⁰

(S) Having received assurances from the GVN in regard to these two points, Presidential approval for crop destruction was granted, and the US State and Defense Departments authorized such operations on a case by case basis, subject to approval at Washington level.

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The following guidelines applied:

- Operations to be implemented only where the stage of crop growth would give reasonable prospects of success;
- Targets to be selected in areas where maximum damage would accrue to the VC as against minimum damage to the friendly populace; and
- Psychological warfare aspects to be considered carefully with a view to minimizing anticipated adverse political repercussions both inside and outside RVN.³¹

(S) Crop destruction missions were initiated during the period 21-23 November 1962, in Phuoc Long Province. Using H-34 helicopters for aerial delivery as well as hand-spray operations, an estimated 300 hectares of rice, beans and manioc were destroyed. This represented denial of roughly 1,000 tons of food to the enemy. More projects of the same nature were completed between November 1962 and March 1963. On 20 March 1963, COMUSMACV and the US Ambassador requested continuance of crop destruction missions and delegation to them of authority to approve crop destruction requests. The State Department response in May 1963 stated:

. . . All crop destruction operations must be approved in advance by Assistant Secretary Far East and the Department of Defense. Crop destruction must be confined to remote areas known to be occupied by VC. It should not be carried on in areas where VC

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are intermingled with native inhabitants and latter cannot escape. Also should be limited to areas where VC do not have nearby alternative sources of food or areas in which there is a food deficit, e. g., high plateau and Zone D.³²

(S) In October 1963, after extensive review of the crop destruction program, COMUSMACV advised his superiors that these operations were an effective weapon against the VC, and asked again for authority to approve them when favorable opportunities presented themselves. On 29 July 1964, the requested authority was delegated to COMUSMACV and the Ambassador.³³

(S) An indicator of the success of herbicide operations was provided by the communists in April 1963 when the Secretary General of the International Control Commission presented a letter from NVN General Vo Nguyen Giap to the GVN. This letter charged that noxious chemicals had been used to carry out "collective reprisals" against the people of RVN in violation of the 1954 Geneva Agreement.³⁴

(S) Additional examples of success included:

- Disclosure by the VC committee in Phuoc Thanh Province that food sources destroyed by herbicide operations in that province could have fed VC troops in the area for two years.

- A 65 percent reduction in VC incidents against the railroad after defoliation of the Saigon-Nha Trang right-of-way.³⁵

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Riot Control Agents (RCA)

(S) Another politically sensitive subject affecting ROE was RVNAF use of riot control munitions in combat operations.³⁶ US policy stipulated that RCA could be used in military operation only in defense of American lives; however, no such constraint applied to RVNAF.³⁷ Since RVNAF possessed the capability to employ RCA tactically, MACV assisted them in developing techniques for such employment. In late December 1964, these munitions were used by ARVN to support two separate heliborne assaults in Tay Ninh Province. Bulk delivery of CS as well as CA and CN/DM grenades was involved. In one operation, there was no contact. In the second, however, use of RCA was successful in reducing ground fire against heliborne assaults.³⁸

Summary

(U) Considerations influencing ROE prior to 1965:

- Restrictions on application of military power had been an essential feature of US national policy; and
- A limited response to aggression against RVN was designed to minimize risk of major escalation.

(U) Within these parameters, air support activities were subject to application of ROE to insure compatibility with the Geneva Protocols. Because of political and psychological sensitivities associated with

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their use, controls on herbicides were rigid from the outset.

(S) Effects of ROE on military operations:

- FARM GATE was hampered by the initial requirement that VNAF student pilots accompany USAF personnel on strike missions. The problem generated by student pilot shortage was ameliorated to a degree by relaxation of the requirement so as to permit either student pilots or observers to be aboard strike aircraft.

- Despite availability of helicopter-mounted automatic weapons, initial ROE denied use of this firepower except in response to enemy initiated fire directed at the aircraft. Later authority "allowing helicopters to initiate fire on clearly identified VC threats" permitted limited operational utilization of this asset.

- Although destruction of enemy crops represented the more urgent and effective use of herbicides, political and psychological considerations, reflected by ROE, delayed the granting of authority for such usage.

Thereafter, enemy propaganda against both crop destruction and defoliation, plus ecological concern emanating from various sources, served to impose uncommon restraints on herbicide operations.³⁹

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ROE, 1965 - 1971

(U) As 1965 began, assessment of the situation in RVN indicated that:

- Authority and effectiveness of the GVN had declined steadily through 1964 as noted in Chapter III, "The Buddhist Uprising in 1966;"

- The same instability that had plagued the government had permeated the RVNAF and reduced its effectiveness; and

- Stepped up NVN assistance to VC units and introduction of NVA elements had swung the balance of political-military-psychological power to the enemy.

- Survival of RVN was in jeopardy.⁴⁰

(U) As an outgrowth of the assessment, ROE were adjusted in relation to:

- Air operations;
- Utilization of herbicides;
- Employment of RCA;
- Naval gun fire (NGF) and artillery support;
- Coastal and inland waterway operations; and
- Action on the part of ground combat forces.⁴¹

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Air Operations

(TS) On 26 January 1965, citing the fact that VNAF could not respond to the increasing requirements for air strikes, COMUSMACV requested emergency authority to employ USAF jet aircraft within RVN under the following conditions:

- Concurrence of the US Ambassador prior to employment;
- Control of strikes by FAC's;
- Strike clearance by the Chief, Joint General Staff,

RVNAF; and

- Decision to execute reserved to COMUSMACV or his deputy.

The US Ambassador concurred.⁴²

(TS) The JCS, on 27 January 1965, approved the request with the stipulation that both they and CINCPAC be notified immediately of any use of the emergency authority.⁴³

(U) Exercise of this authority occurred on 19 February 1965, when a VC regiment was reported to be concentrated in the jungles of Phuoc Tuy Province. After receipt of necessary GVN clearance, 24 USAF B-57 "Canberra" bombers were directed against this target. Five days later an enemy ambush on Route 19 between An Khe and Pleiku (the same area in which the Viet Minh had destroyed the French

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Group Mobile 100 in 1954), trapped two ARVN companies and their US advisors. B-57's attacked the ambushing force while helicopters extracted the beleaguered friendly units. The enemy lost 150 killed. Following this action, under procedures developed by the 2d Air Division, use of US jets to support the RVNAF became standard practice.⁴⁴

(S) On 9 March 1965, the JCS granted a COMUSMACV request to:

- Mark FARM GATE aircraft with US insignia; and
- When necessary, conduct combat operations with these aircraft without VNAF personnel aboard.⁴⁵

(S) The JCS did not authorize a request by COMUSMACV for use of Thailand-based aircraft for strikes in the RVN, and prohibited use of US aircraft for strikes VNAF could execute. COMUSMACV was reminded that utmost care should be taken to preclude incidents involving the RVN population or forces in connection with use of US aircraft on strike missions.⁴⁶

(TS) Responsibility for further development of ROE was vested in COMUSMACV who established rules governing use of air support. Approval of the province chief or higher GVN authority was required for strikes by US aircraft not involving close air support. ROE were established to protect urban areas, villages and hamlets. Special

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instructions took cognizance of religious monuments and public places having historical value. Of primary concern to COMUSMACV in these particulars was adoption of measures to minimize to the highest possible degree noncombatant casualties and damage to civilian property.⁴⁷

(TS) Continuing close involvement on the US side of senior administration officials in matters relating to tactical conduct of the war resulted in a message on 13 September 1965 from CJCS pointing out a problem of semantics regarding the term "free bomb or strike zones," which term was believed by some to imply indiscriminate bombing. The CJCS also requested information from COMUSMACV on the nature of air interdiction to include target identification, approval authority required, type of control exercised, weapons used and results achieved.⁴⁸

(TS) COMUSMACV responded:

- Target selection and identification: Targets were generated in both US and GVN channels by drawing on a country-wide surveillance system. Identity of legitimate targets was verified by RVNAF elements familiar with the terrain and situation within their areas of responsibility;

- Type of control: Virtually all air strikes were under control of an airborne FAC -- USAF, USMC or VNAF;

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- Weapons used: Types of ordnance expended within the RVN were napalm, general purpose bombs, fragmentation bombs, CBU2 and CBU14 bombs, 20 mm and 50 caliber ammunition, 2.75 inch rockets and 5.0 inch rockets;

- Typical results: After action reports indicated the number of VC structures destroyed and damaged, number of VC sampans sunk and damaged, vehicles destroyed and damaged, secondary explosions and fires.⁴⁹

(TS) Armed reconnaissance missions, because they depended on pilot judgment to identify targets, were not used.⁵⁰

(S) Additional measures approved by COMUSMACV on 19 October 1965 included:

- The requirement for control of air attacks on hamlets or villages by an airborne or ground FAC, and execution only after US-GVN approval;

- Permission to strike the enemy in hamlets or villages if prior announcement of the air strike by leaflets and/or speaker systems had warned the inhabitants to leave the village;

- Authority to strike the enemy in hamlets or villages without prior warning in conjunction with a ground operation involving movement of friendly forces through the area;

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- Prohibition against striking hamlets or villages not associated with ground operations, and not warned prior to attack, even if light fire was being received from them;

- Redesignation of "free bomb zones" as "specified strike zones"; and

- Application to artillery and NGF of restrictions prescribed for air strikes.

COMUSMACV stated that steps would be taken to obtain parallel implementation of these policies by the RVNAF.⁵¹

(TS) ROE applicable to sensitive targets was updated and expanded in MACV Directive 525-13, 12 October 1968. The latter noted the enemy's use of areas and places which had religious or historical value to the Vietnamese. When the enemy sheltered himself in such areas, only the responsible "senior brigade or higher commander" involved could order an air attack against him. This commander was enjoined to identify the enemy positively and to use weapons and forces to insure his prompt defeat with minimum damage to structures in the area.⁵²

Herbicide Operations

(U) Concurrent with introduction of US ground combat forces and greatly increased firepower into RVN, consideration was given

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to expanded use of herbicides to assist in countering the enemy's increasing strength and effectiveness.⁵³

(S) Militarily, both defoliation and crop destruction programs in support of the counterinsurgency effort had demonstrated their value by:

- Reducing the tactical advantage accruing to the enemy through use of natural concealment; and by

- Denying subsistence to the enemy, thus reducing his mobility and compounding his logistical problems.⁵⁴

(S) These factors notwithstanding, the inherent objections to and the propaganda value associated with use of chemical agents of any kind, presented problems to those required to rule on an expanded program. It is not surprising, therefore, that increasing use of herbicides was subjected to careful scrutiny at Washington level. MACV's herbicide requests, for example, required Department of Defense validation.⁵⁵

(S) Underlying the US position was the thesis that use of herbicides for defoliation or crop destruction was primarily a GVN responsibility. Accordingly:

- Subject to policy guidance by Departments of State and Defense, COMUSMACV and the US Ambassador jointly were required to approve US support of GVN requests for herbicide use;

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- A special US country team committee was tasked to expedite coordination of GVN requests for herbicide operations;

- COMUSMACV was made responsible for command supervision, coordination and control of all US herbicide support effort.⁵⁶

(S) Using approval authority granted in 1964, COMUSMACV gradually increased the use of herbicides as a tactical weapon. By late 1965 this produced a shortage of both herbicides and delivery aircraft. Accordingly, at COMUSMACV's request, the number of spray aircraft (UC-123) was increased from four in 1965 to twenty-four in 1967. Although Department of Defense continued to validate herbicide procurement requirements, in late 1966 MACV was informed that only half of the Fiscal Year (FY) 1968 requirements could be met. In response, COMUSMACV recommended that all sources be explored to obtain additional deliveries. The continuing shortages resulted in projects being delayed as much as six months by the end of 1966.⁵⁷ The JCS informed COMUSMACV in February 1969 that herbicides were no longer in critical supply.⁵⁸

(S) Although the expanded program was highly controlled, a number of US scientists in 1966 began actively to protest military employment of herbicides, describing such use as "barbarous

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because herbicides are indiscriminate," and claiming that it "constituted a dangerous precedent." Significantly, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), in December 1966, demanded an investigation into "the uses of biological and chemical agents to modify the environment, whether for peaceful or military purposes." Failing in an attempt to obtain United Nations sponsorship for a field trip to the RVN, the AAAS sponsored their own trip. Although disagreement developed within the organization over the long-range effects of herbicides, the published findings were critical of the program.⁵⁹

(S) In further pursuit of scientific analysis of herbicide use, the Department of Defense sponsored a study by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the National Research Council (NRC). Results included the view that the long-range effects of defoliation were not predictable at that time. This undertaking led to a revision of MACV herbicide operations policy Directive 525-1 in August 1969. The directive is updated periodically and reviewed by NAS and NRC.⁶⁰

(S) In September 1969, CINCPAC directed COMUSMACV to reduce herbicide operations by 70 percent from 1 November 1969 to 1 July 1970.⁶¹

(C) Information reported to the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) on 13 April 1970 indicated some

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herbicide ingredients used commercially (also in Orange) "might produce abnormal development in unborn animals."⁶² On 15 April 1970 the JCS directed that the use of Orange be discontinued.⁶³

(S) On 23 October 1970 the Embassy-MACV interagency committee on herbicide operations met to develop recommendations concerning the future of the program. As a result, in December 1970, the Ambassador and COMUSMACV agreed effective May 1971 to:

- Terminate crop destruction operations; and
- Use defoliation only to enhance security of friendly installations using helicopter or hand spray techniques.⁶⁴

(S) COMUSMACV's evaluation of the crop destruction program indicated that herbicides used for this purpose constituted an important element of combat support in connection with resource denial programs. Additionally, the evaluation considered use of herbicides overall as having contributed significantly to support of the pacification and Vietnamization programs.⁶⁵

Riot Control Agents

(S) Although the RVNAF was using RCA in tactical operations when US ground combat forces arrived in RVN early in 1965, an incident on 5 September of that year propelled into the limelight its use by US forces. Near Qui Nhon, a USMC battalion had chased

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approximately 20 VC soldiers into a tunnel which also contained some 390 women, children and aged civilians. Whereas the commander could have used high explosives, flame throwers, grenades or other "conventional" munitions to destroy the enemy with associated heavy loss of life among the noncombatants, use of tear gas in an attempt to "flush" the VC from the tunnel was not authorized.⁶⁶

(S) As it developed, the commander, unaware of the prohibition against US use of this agent, authorized his men to throw tear gas grenades into the tunnel. Soon thereafter all 20 VC were captured and the civilians were released unharmed. Press coverage was critical of the action, however. The charge was made, for example, that "testing of new gas agents" was being conducted in RVN. To this MACV stated that riot control agents are not lethal gas; rather they represent a humane method of protecting noncombatants being held hostage by VC/NVA forces. Interestingly, neither the communist nor foreign press commented significantly concerning the alleged use of "gas." Yet, on the US side many were prone to condemn use of the humane approach, while many who might have been expected to comment favorably remained silent.⁶⁷

(S) Investigation confirmed that the battalion commander was unaware of the restriction and had acted on his own initiative to

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accomplish the mission in such fashion as to hold noncombatant casualties to the minimum. Based on the favorable results achieved and the logic associated with this use of RCA, COMUSMACV requested authority to employ them on a continuing basis.⁶⁸

(S) On 23 September 1965, the Secretary of Defense authorized use of RCA in a single combat operation planned for 25 September. The CJCS, commenting on this authority, stated that steps were being taken to gain permission for COMUSMACV to use RCA whenever he considered it necessary.⁶⁹

(S) The exceptional results attained by forces employing RCA to cope with VC in caves and tunnels prompted a new COMUSMACV request for their use on another specific operation. Subsequently, he asked again for authority to use them as he deemed appropriate.⁷⁰

(TS) On 3 November 1965, COMUSMACV received authority to employ RCA at his discretion during the course of military operations in RVN.⁷¹ Examples of such employment are highlighted by:

- A VC Hoi Chanh (one who "rallies" to the GVN) report that an attack by US forces employing RCA during the week of 18-25 October 1969 completely disrupted activities in his base camp; and

- Successful denial to the VC of tunnels and bunkers by the 173d Airborne Brigade in late 1969.⁷²

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(C) The enemy has employed tear gas against US and GVN forces on several occasions, apparently for purposes of harassment. On 20 and 23 January 1970, for example, an agent of this type was employed against US fire support bases NORA and SHERRY, but with little effect. Such use can be expected to continue.⁷³

Artillery and NGF Support

(S) NGF support of both anti-infiltration and ground operations within RVN was initiated in May 1965. Application of this firepower was guided by ROE which stipulated that:

- Observed NGF missions would be controlled by US personnel from either airborne or ground observation posts;

- Unobserved NGF, authorized in late 1965, could be applied against VC forces outside of hamlets in target areas declared hostile by the GVN; and

- Missions against known or suspected targets in hamlets or villages occupied by noncombatants would be controlled by airborne or ground observers, executed only after approval by US and GVN authorities and subject to ROE applicable to other categories of firepower.⁷⁴

(C) Unobserved fire could be delivered on specified strike zones after the appropriate US and GVN clearance authorities had

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been notified. The latter were the senior US commander in the area in which the SSZ was located and the RVNAF corps commander in each CTZ. This procedure necessarily caused some time lag in obtaining clearance to fire.⁷⁵

(C) Evolution of NGF and artillery ROE during the period 1965-1971, entailed weighing the results to be achieved by application of supporting gunfire against risk to the lives and property of friendly forces and noncombatants. Restrictions and implementing instructions were governed by appropriate MACV directives and generally were normal for artillery operations.⁷⁶

Coastal and Inland Waterway Operations

(S) On 16 February 1965, an Army medical evacuation helicopter reported a "fair sized ship" in Vung Ro Bay on the central coast of RVN. The ship, a North Vietnamese 130-foot, diesel-powered trawler, was sunk by air strikes. The registry of the ship, her 100 tons of war cargo and the caches of weapons found on shore led to implementation on 24 March 1965 of MARKET TIME, a combined United States Navy (USN) and Vietnamese Navy (VNN) anti-infiltration effort in the coastal waters of RVN.⁷⁷

(S) The area of operations included 850 miles of RVN coastline notched with a succession of bays, harbors, coves, and rivermouths

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which provide excellent cover and concealment for hiding and unloading of vessels suitable for use by pirates, smugglers or enemy infiltrators.⁷⁸

(S) Enemy vessels had complete freedom of movement along the coast outside the RVN twelve-mile limit. When directly seaward of its destination, the infiltrator could either make a high speed dash for shore or work its way in by merging with friendly coastal traffic. Although USN forces had no authority to board and search suspected enemy vessels, the VNN could do so in RVN territorial waters.⁷⁹

(TS) USN vessels committed to MARKET TIME reported suspicious vessels to the VNN for "stop and search" operations. In reality, however, the VNN was incapable of responding to all suspicious sightings. This situation was rectified to a degree on 11 May 1965, when the GVN authorized USN vessels to:

- Stop, search and seize any vessels not clearly engaged in innocent passage within three miles of the South Vietnamese coastline; and

- Stop and search any vessel out to twelve miles which was or reasonably could be assumed to be of South Vietnamese origin.

(TS) Pursuit into Cambodian waters was not permitted under US ROE.⁸⁰ VNN observed this prohibition.⁸¹

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(S) In May 1966, the GVN declared that the twelve-mile territorial waters of the RVN were defensive sea areas, making ships of any country operating therein subject to "visit" and search. The waters inside the five-mile territorial sea claimed by Cambodia were not to be entered.⁸²

(S) Effectiveness of MARKET TIME could be assessed in terms of increased NVN dependence on slower, more difficult and more expensive overland routes. Contacts in coastal waters decreased; indeed, in some areas there was total absence of contact with vessels attempting to infiltrate.⁸³

(C) Of equal importance to denial of coastal waters to the enemy was denial of RVN inland waterways. Initial denial operations began on 18 December 1965 under the code designation, GAME WARDEN. Operations involved surveillance to enforce curfews and to prevent VC infiltration, movement and supply activity along the major rivers of the Mekong Delta.⁸⁴

(U) Significant problems attended development of completely effective ROE for GAME WARDEN. Central to the difficulty was provision by the 1954 Geneva Conference of free navigation for the signatories throughout the Mekong River, its tributaries and navigable mouths in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and on the waterways giving

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access to the port of Saigon. This freedom of navigation could be granted to other states subject to consent of the signatories.⁸⁵

(S) In light of the foregoing, the GVN could do relatively little to interdict ships bound for Cambodia, despite intelligence indications that Cambodia was playing an increasing role in connection with logistic support of VC/NVA forces. Its authority, however, did encompass:

- The requirement for commercial ships to obtain GVN authorization to transit the RVN portion of the waterway system.
- Denial of authorization for ships enroute from communist ports or from countries that did not recognize the GVN;
- Denial of passage to any ships carrying manifested munitions or military commodities without GVN approval;
- Permission for navigation only during daylight; and
- Authorization for night layovers only at prescribed anchorages.⁸⁶

(TS) Concurrent with implementation of GAME WARDEN, COMUSMACV considered imposition of a naval blockade against Cambodia. A group formed to study the requirements necessary for an effective blockade indicated subsequently that:

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- VNN resources were not sufficient to enforce a blockade of the Mekong entrance to Cambodia and of the sea approaches to Cambodian ports;

- A quarantine similar to that used by the US during the 1962 Cuban crisis would be more suitable than a blockade, notably within the framework of international law; however,

- A quarantine was impractical because of the nature of cargo being shipped.⁸⁷

(TS) Of possible remaining courses of action, the one recommended by COMUSMACV called for strict GVN enforcement of current regulations, since this measure could be taken immediately within existing authority and protocol. Additionally, he sought US Embassy assistance in obtaining controls on the Mekong and Bassac Rivers beyond those authorized in relation to the 1954 protocols. While this approach was being considered, infiltration continued. 1966 witnessed unloading of large quantities of war materiel from Chinese Communist ships at the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville.⁸⁸ In December of that year, following Washington-level study of the COMUSMACV - US Embassy proposals, the JCS approved for GAME WARDEN instructions similar to those in effect for MARKET TIME. Immediate pursuit into Cambodian territory, airspace, or internal waters was prohibited. However,

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authority was granted GAME WARDEN vessels to return hostile fire received from VC/NVA forces as necessary for self-defense.⁸⁹

(S) From a state of virtually "no control" in early 1966, COMUSMACV was able to proclaim in 1968 that: "GAME WARDEN has been successful in maintaining control of major rivers of the Mekong Delta, and has continued to interdict and harass the enemy's logistic lines of communication throughout the GAME WARDEN tactical area of responsibility."⁹⁰

Ground Combat Operations

(U) Missions assigned to US ground forces in RVN revolved around combat operations and pacification. Although a traditional Army and Marine Corps mission, combat operations in RVN, including those associated with support of pacification, were complicated by the extensive control measures necessary to protect noncombatants and their property, by difficulty in identifying and fixing the enemy and by the number of sanctuaries available to the enemy. The rules of land warfare, ROE for land and water areas contiguous to RVN, and ROE for supporting firepower combined to provide safe haven for the enemy throughout RVN and in areas adjacent thereto. The enemy, of course, required and exploited this advantage in furthering his mission.⁹¹

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(U) An example of the relationship between ROE and enemy use of safe haven, in this case a fortified hamlet, is provided by a USMC operation on 3 August 1965 against the Cam Ne village complex in northern RVN. Here one finds highlighted the specific problems of safety of noncombatants and use of other than "conventional" munitions. The operation was directed against a known VC company within Cam Ne.⁹²

(U) A Canadian newsman, Morley Safer, and his CBS camera crew accompanied the Marines and filmed the action for subsequent viewing by the American public. Mr. Safer remarked that "a burst of sniper fire from an unidentified direction" caused the Marines to react. The film indicated that in retaliation an estimated 150 dwellings were burned down by use on the Marines' part of everything from cigarette lighters to flame throwers. The pleas of the Vietnamese noncombatants to delay the burning so their belongings could be removed appeared to be ignored. As might be expected, publicity surrounding the incident touched off a controversy concerning ground operations against a village and use of other than the so-called "conventional" munitions, flame in this instance.⁹³

(U) Cam Ne was a fortified hamlet -- an enemy base. The CBS film did not cover the preliminary action involving enemy fire coming from the village complex, nor the cement fortifications and extensive

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trench works discovered later.⁹⁴

(S) As an outgrowth of Cam Ne, a CJCS message to COMUSMACV on 14 August 1965 requested information relative to actions on the part of US ground troops that might impact on noncombatants. CJCS closed his message by stating he felt the predominant interest of the American public would be to make sure that US forces were given every opportunity to protect themselves while at the same time keeping noncombatant casualties as low as possible.⁹⁵ An additional message from the CJCS to COMUSMACV on 26 August 1965, requested information on further actions planned or taken already within RVN to protect noncombatants.⁹⁶

(S) In reply on 28 August 1965, COMUSMACV noted that a genuine problem existed that would continue for as long as US forces remained in Vietnam. In his view there were no "rules of engagement" that could take the place of judgment, or which would be of much assistance to the commander faced with balancing his responsibility for the safety and lives of his men against desire to minimize noncombatant casualties. Thus, hard decisions had to be made at all levels of command down to the squad on patrol. In the long run, hope was seen to rest on the effectiveness of MACV's indoctrination program, one designed to induce a "state of mind" in all forces aimed at bringing about the desired results. Another hope resided in instructions issued to

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commanders, FAC's, armed helicopter pilots and all others who had the capability to cause noncombatant casualties to use utmost discretion and restraint in their combat actions.⁹⁷

(S) COMUSMACV reiterated that US troops necessarily would be used in populated areas important to both the NVA and VC. In this circumstance he advocated:

- Continued efforts in the US to explain the nature of the war and the fact that the real battle was for control of the people and the hamlets in which they live;

- Establishment of some control over press and photographic coverage; and

- Intensification of the existing MACV indoctrination program to insure that all commanders and troops understood the importance of minimizing noncombatant casualties.⁹⁸

(TS) A Secretary of Defense memorandum for the JCS on 21 April 1971, contained the assumption that all ground combat responsibilities would be turned over to RVNAF by 1 July 1971, and requested plans for remaining US forces.⁹⁹

(TS) The JCS response on 14 May 1971 stated that the role of US ground combat forces after 1 July 1971 would be:

- Dynamic defense of US installations;
- Security and processing of equipment and supplies to be

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retrograded; and

- Contribution to the capability and development of the RVNAF by provision of essential combat support and combat service support.¹⁰⁰

(TS) Under the dynamic defense concept US forces with GVN Regional Force and Popular Force units are to conduct operations at a distance from vital installations to keep the enemy off balance and disrupt his operations against the installations. This portion of the concept is intended to differ from combat operations which are viewed as offensive actions designed "to locate and neutralize VC/NVA Main Force Units, their equipment, base areas, and lines of communication."¹⁰¹ Concurrently, improved Regional Forces, Popular Forces and National Police, augmented by US military police as required, assume increasing responsibility for local security of sensitive US installations.¹⁰²

(U) In addition to written rules, there were some in the unwritten category. A US corps commander remarked in June 1970, for example, that although he was never instructed in writing to reduce casualties (recognizing that normal operational planning calls for mission accomplishment with minimum casualties), "One would have to have been blind to not recognize the need, above all else, to reduce US casualties

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and still accomplish the mission. I so instructed my commanders." No written rules could spell out the procedures to accomplish these conflicting tasks. It was a matter of judgment on a case by case basis on the part of responsible commanders.¹⁰³

Summary

(U) Effects of ROE on military operations:

- In the case of tactical air, ROE progressively permitted wider and more effective exploitation of these resources. At the same time they tightened measures designed to insure maximum protection for noncombatants and their property. Although these measures degraded optimum use of air power to some degree, the loss was more than offset by the favorable impact on the RVN populace and by provision of evidence to the US public of restraint and humanitarian concern in employment of air delivered firepower.

- Limitations on herbicide operations prevented full utilization of their potential. From the outset, political and psychological sensitivities associated with herbicide use, later joined by scientific concern over long-term genetic and ecological effects of such use, led to development of highly restrictive ROE.

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- From an initial policy banning employment of RCA by US forces, ROE gradually permitted effective operational use under approval authority delegated to COMUSMACV.
- Responsiveness of NGF and artillery support was retarded to some degree by the time required to obtain clearance to fire.
- Within the framework of international law and the 1954 Geneva Protocols, MARKET TIME and GAME WARDEN operations improved steadily in effectiveness as ROE were relaxed to permit full application of naval resources and of GVN control over shipping bound for Cambodia via the Mekong River and its lower tributaries.
- Ground combat operations were rendered more difficult and complex by ROE designed to protect noncombatants and civilian property. "Sensational" news media reporting of incidents at times exerted forceful pressure on the nature, scope and application of ROE governing ground combat operations.

BORDER AREAS AND DMZ

Cambodia

(U) Coverage of ROE applicable to Cambodia is included in Chapter VI, "Prior Proposals for and the Limited Incursion into Cambodia."

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Laos

(TS) Ground operations affecting Laos were of two types:

- Combat operations near the RVN-Laotian border; and
- Cross-border reconnaissance and intelligence operations

carried out by mixed US-RVNAF Special Forces (code designation, PRAIRIE FIRE).¹⁰⁴

(TS) As the US combat commitment in RVN increased in 1965, PRAIRIE FIRE operations were expanded with Washington approval. New authority permitted participating elements to:

- Emplace anti-personnel devices;
- Capture or kill enemy personnel;
- Perform bomb damage assessment for ARC LIGHT

missions; and

- Control air strikes.¹⁰⁵

(TS) No ROE having been established previously for combat operations near the RVN-Laotian border, in March 1966 COMUSMACV requested instructions similar to those for the RVN-Cambodia border. (See Chapter VI, "Prior Proposals for and the Limited Incursion into Cambodia.") Three months later, in June, the JCS promulgated appropriate guidance which it specified as being highly sensitive.¹⁰⁶

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(TS) The new ROE stipulated that when, in the judgment of the local US ground force commander, enemy actions from within Laos clearly endangered his forces, he could take counteractions in self-defense to include:

- Artillery and air strikes against enemy forces firing from the Laotian side of the border on US forces, RVNAF or FWMAF;
- Maneuver of US troops, while in actual contact with the enemy, into Laos as necessary for the preservation of the friendly force; and
- Delivery of fire against Laotian villages if fire was being received from them (a notable difference from ROE pertaining to Cambodia wherein delivery of fire against villages was prohibited under all circumstances).¹⁰⁷

(TS) COMUSMACV further enjoined commanders at all echelons to exercise sound judgment when attacking a populated area, to include weighing the consequences of noncombatant casualties against the threat to their forces.¹⁰⁸

(TS) As demands for intelligence increased, COMUSMACV proposed in November 1966 to extend the PRAIRIE FIRE operational area further into Laos so as to cover the area bordering Quang Tri Province in RVN. The request was reviewed; however, no decision was forthcoming.¹⁰⁹

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(TS) On 26 January 1967, COMUSMACV advanced a plan for further expansion of PRAIRIE FIRE operations to include deep penetrations of long duration in Laos for the purpose of developing a resistance movement within selected ethnic groups. The US Ambassador felt that a clear assessment of the political implications could not be made but that further study might clarify the picture. Action on the expanded plan for PRAIRIE FIRE "stalled-out."¹¹⁰

(TS) An additional operation into Laos was proposed by COMUSMACV in April 1967. The plan, called SOUTH PAW, involved use of regular RVNAF units as follows:

- Initial insertion of reinforced battalion with the mission of intensifying interdiction of NVA infiltration; and
- Follow-up by a division-sized unit tasked with conduct of sustained operations against enemy forces and bases in Laos.

Although the plan was approved with modifications by both CINCPAC and the JCS, the Secretary of Defense in November 1967 decided against implementation at that time.¹¹¹

(TS) On 3 December 1967, COMUSMACV made still another proposal to CINCPAC for operations into Laos, which envisioned use of US and GVN forces staged from I CTZ to penetrate and destroy NVA base areas. Entitled YORK, this plan was approved by the JCS

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on 6 December 1967, for implementation on or about 3 February 1968.¹¹² Although it would have heralded a major change in ROE for Laos, execution of the plan was thwarted by the enemy's Tet offensive in 1968.¹¹³ In the aftermath of that offensive, COMUSMACV requested authority to raid selected border sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos. On 24 March 1968, the CJCS notified him that any significant change in US military strategy for the war in RVN was remote.¹¹⁴

(TS) PRAIRIE FIRE operations continued in 1970. Because of *Case?* the Cooper-Church amendment, however, US forces were prohibited from crossing into Laos on PRAIRIE FIRE missions after April 1971.¹¹⁵

The DMZ

(U) Provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1954 served for roughly a decade to "neutralize" the DMZ. Commencing in the early 1960's, however, NVN activity in the zone increased in connection with its support of insurgent effort in RVN. The International Control Commission, which had access to portions of the area on a limited basis, was cognizant of the increase.¹¹⁶

(TS-LIMDIS) During this same period RVNAF patrols operated periodically in the DMZ to gather intelligence on and monitor enemy activity.¹¹⁷

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(U) It was against this backdrop that evidence of significant enemy infiltration through the DMZ appeared in mid-1964. Whereas the GVN favored positive intervention, the US made it clear that it could neither countenance nor support such action by virtue of the 1954 protocols.¹¹⁸

(TS-LIMDIS) Accordingly, RVNAF developed plans for deployment of forces to meet overt thrusts by NVN across the DMZ. Later, in 1965, COMUSMACV forwarded a series of proposals calling for special operations both in the DMZ and portions of Laos bordering it.¹¹⁹ These were not approved.

(U) On 20 July 1966, the JCS authorized limited use of US fire-power to counter another cycle of increased NVA infiltration through the DMZ. Based on serious threat to friendly troops posed by the infiltration, US commanders were authorized to direct air strikes, artillery fire and NGF against clearly defined enemy military activity in the area south of the Provisional Military Demarcation Line (PMDL).¹²⁰

(TS) In 1966, it became evident that the NVA had developed a vast armed camp north of the PMDL which remained immune to attack.¹²¹ Accordingly, in October of that same year, COMUSMACV requested authority to utilize RVNAF teams accompanied by US

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personnel in the western portion of the DMZ to observe enemy activity, develop targets and carry out selective attacks. Washington denied the request and 1966 closed with no relaxation of rules prohibiting employment of US personnel within the DMZ.¹²²

(TS) ROE for the DMZ were modified in December 1966 to permit artillery fire against enemy weapons firing on friendly forces from positions north of the PMDL. Artillery was to be emplaced to minimize potential damage to the friendly noncombatant population by enemy counterbattery fire.¹²³

(TS) On 23 February 1967, following numerous requests therefor, authority was granted to conduct NGF against targets in the DMZ north of the PMDL.¹²⁴

(TS) JCS approval on 27 February 1967 of modified ROE governing PRAIRIE FIRE permitted:

- Extension of PRAIRIE FIRE operations in Laos to a distance of 30 kilometers above the DMZ; and
- Employment of up to three platoons of mixed US - RVNAF personnel in the entire PRAIRIE FIRE area.

Authority to employ exclusively US units in the DMZ was withheld.¹²⁵

(U) On 1 November 1968, all offensive actions by US forces into the DMZ were suspended incident to cessation of air operations

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against NVN. New ROE dealing with reaction to enemy operations south of the DMZ were established by the JCS.¹²⁶

(S) In the months that followed, COMUSMACV made numerous requests for authority to take more aggressive action against enemy activity in and above the DMZ. Results of this endeavor are reflected in the following ROE whose key provisions have continued in effect for approximately two years.¹²⁷

- Enemy small arms, artillery, mortar or rocket fire from north of or within the DMZ may be countered with heavy counter-battery fire and/or air attack until enemy weapons are silenced;

- Surface-to-air missile or anti-aircraft artillery firing at allied aircraft from across or within the DMZ is to be neutralized;

- Enemy ground attacks up to battalion size from north of the southern boundary of the DMZ are to be repulsed by whatever action is deemed necessary by the US commander to defend his command. Counteraction may include ground operation south of the PMDL. However, at no time are ground forces to be employed north of the PMDL;

- Enemy large-scale attacks from north of the southern boundary of the DMZ which demand a response beyond those authorized require JCS authority for appropriate counteractions;

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- Overflight of NVN by B-52's during the conduct of B-52

strikes in the DMZ is not authorized;

- Sensors are authorized in the DMZ south of the PMDL to provide the required degree of intelligence necessary for safety of forces;

- Squad-size reconnaissance patrols with appropriate infantry unit backup to assist extraction if required are authorized in the DMZ south of the PMDL; and

- Nothing in ROE provisions is to be construed as precluding each commander from exercising the inherent right and responsibility to conduct operations for self-defense of his forces.

(TS) A further request during 1970 for PRAIRIE FIRE teams to operate in the DMZ south of the PMDL awaits decision by the Secretary of Defense.¹²⁸

(TS) During the 1965-68 period, restraints on US ground operations and artillery fire in the DMZ placed primary reliance on air power to counter enemy activity. Areas adjacent to the DMZ were vital to the VC/NVA infiltration and logistic efforts and all were targetted in various air interdiction programs.¹²⁹

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Summary

(U) ROE applicable to border areas and the DMZ, to include employment of ground combat forces, air and NGF, involved three major considerations:

- Political constraints to avoid international incidents;
- Gradual increase in application of firepower as enemy intentions clarified and international risks were identified; and
- Enemy use of border areas as sanctuaries.

(TS) Resulting ROE affected military operations by:

- Preventing adequate ground engagement of enemy base areas and LOC in sanctuaries, including the DMZ;
- Reducing the effectiveness of air interdiction of the enemy's base areas and LOC; and
- Increasing the vulnerability of friendly forces.

ASSESSMENT

(U) During the period 1961-1963, the enemy continued to gain strength and to develop both an infrastructure and a tri-level force structure (guerrillas, local forces and main forces). The GVN counter-effort progressed more slowly. Insofar as the US was concerned, ROE for the period were intended to keep its involvement to a minimum and to uphold international agreements. Primary

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emphasis was focused on helping the GVN to suppress the externally controlled and supported insurgent movement. Ironically, as 1963 ended, the size of the US Military Assistance Advisory Group was reduced on the basis that the insurgent threat had diminished.

(U) The year 1964 was a significant turning point in RVN. Deterioration of GVN energy and authority, concurrent with greatly increased effort on the part of the VC and NVN, combined to tilt the balance of power strongly in favor of the enemy. In response, the level of US assistance was raised, MACV advisors were increased and ROE were modified to make more effective use of US resources short of overt participation in combat operations.

(U) Beginning in 1965 and reaching a peak in 1968, impressive US military power was brought to bear in support of RVN. ROE moved in the direction of improving the effectiveness of US military forces while at the same time insuring maximum protection for noncombatants and civilian property.

(U) For the 1968-71 period, ROE modifications generally were responsive to need for raising the effectiveness of allied forces to the maximum in relation to the enemy threat. Revisions permitting improved air interdiction of enemy LOC in Laos, operations into the Cambodian and southern Laotian sanctuaries, protective reaction

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strikes against enemy air defense sites in NVN and employment of VNN forces on the Mekong River in Cambodia were instrumental in improving the allied posture. ROE pertaining to the DMZ continued to place US-GVN forces at a disadvantage by restricting them primarily to defensive reaction to enemy offensive initiatives.

CONCLUSIONS

(U) Non-military considerations have exerted strong, continuing and generally restrictive influence on ROE governing conduct of ground, sea and air operations in SEA. Salient among these considerations are:

- US adherence to Hague and Geneva Conventions on warfare, together with selective US observance of both the 1954 Geneva Conference provisions relating to Indochina, and the provisions of the 1962 Geneva Accords on Laos;

- Insistence on the part of the US public, expressed in part through congress and the administration, on minimizing noncombatant casualties and destruction of civilian property;

- Traditional aversion to employment of chemical munitions which, in the minds of some, encompasses RCA. In addition, restrictive influence has been generated by concern on the part of various scientists and environmentalists over long-term genetic and

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ecological effects of herbicides as used in RVN;

- Political restraints on military action to neutralize enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia, Laos and southern NVN, the 1970 incursion into the enemy's Cambodian base areas notwithstanding;

- Orientation toward sensational reporting and in some cases, anti-war bias on the part of the news media; and

- US Congressional enactments such as the 1970 ^{Case} Cooper-Church Amendment.

(U) Broadly speaking, ROE have affected military operations in SEA by:

- Frustrating the application of airpower against NVN;
- Preventing adequate ground engagement of enemy base areas and LOC in sanctuaries, including the DMZ;
- Reducing the effectiveness of air interdiction of the enemy's base areas and LOC; and
- Increasing the vulnerability of friendly forces.

(U) During the 1965-71 period, ROE as utilized in SEA moved in the direction of improving the effectiveness of US military forces, while at the same time insuring maximum protection for noncombatants and civilian property.

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(U) ROE pertaining to the DMZ have continued to place US-GVN forces at a disadvantage by restricting them primarily to defensive reaction to enemy offensive initiatives.

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CHAPTER II

FREE WORLD MILITARY ASSISTANCE FORCES (U)

PURPOSE

(U) Introduction and employment of Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) have provided a notably instructive example of the influence of nonmilitary considerations on the conduct of military affairs. This chapter will expand on the example and frame certain conclusions with respect to it.

APPROACH

(U) In examining the FWMAF primary consideration will be given to:

- Political considerations underlying their introduction into RVN;
- Command and control arrangements;
- Constraints limiting their full potentialities; and
- Economic support furnished by the United States (US).

(U) FWMAF relate to those countries, other than the US or the RVN, that have provided military manpower and material assistance in combatting Viet Cong and North Vietnamese aggression. Although

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this discussion will concern itself primarily with ground forces, FWMAF include limited naval and air elements.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS - MORE FLAGS

(U) When it became evident in 1964 that military reinforcement from external sources would be required to enable the South Vietnamese to withstand growing enemy pressure, the US Government and the Government of Vietnam (GVN) addressed the possibility of obtaining additional outside assistance. Among factors considered was the desirability of concerted effort by the free nations of the world, especially those of Southeast Asia, to come to the aid of the RVN whose freedom was being threatened. Further, it was recognized that participation by other nations would also diminish communist propaganda claims that US aid and intervention constituted "imperialist aggression." With these thoughts in mind, President Lyndon B. Johnson, on 23 April 1964, advanced what came to be known as the "More Flags Concept" when he stated:

I would hope that we would see some other flags in there, other nations as a result of the SEATO meeting, and other conferences we have had, and that we could all unite in an attempt to stop the spread of communism in that area of the world, and the attempt to destroy freedom.¹

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(U) Unfortunately, the effort to gain "more flags" met with only limited success. Four nations -- Australia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea (ROK) and Thailand -- sent combat troops. The Philippines sent a civic action group (PHILCAGV), the Republic of China (ROC) a political warfare advisory group, and Spain a medical team.²

~~(S)~~ Before the end of 1964, an International Military Assistance Office was formed to serve as the agency of Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), for dealing with matters concerning FWMAF in the RVN. On 6 October 1965, the title of this instrumentality was changed to the Free World Military Assistance Office, a designation that continues today. Operating under the staff supervision of COMUSMACV's Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans, the agency's first task was preparation of a policy and procedures guide to be used in working with forces from the contributing countries. The guide was developed, staffed and subsequently published in January 1965 as a Commander in Chief, Pacific manual.³

~~(S)~~ Free World Military Assistance Policy Councils (FWMAPC) were established early in 1965 to facilitate assignment of missions,⁴ conduct of planning, coordination of effort and consummation of support agreements for each national contingent. Each council consisted of:

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- The Chief, RVN Joint General Staff (JGS), who served as chairman;

- COMUSMACV; and

- The senior commander of the FWMAF concerned.

In practice, the councils rarely have met in formal session in that most problems are solved by direct coordination between the principals or by normal staff action.

(TS) It is significant that in US joint channels consideration was given during mid-1965 to establishment of a formal multi-national command organization even though such an arrangement would have been expensive in personnel and facility requirements. Whereas the organization might have given the appearance of unity of command and control, COMUSMACV considered that imposition of a political super-structure would have had the opposite effect. In essence, the council arrangements had the advantages of a unified command without the political disadvantages.⁵ Moreover, time required to assemble, organize and train an international staff, plus lack of trained personnel within assets of the smaller countries, made this approach impractical.⁶

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Australia - New Zealand

(U) Prior to the initial US efforts in 1964 to gain greater international representation in the RVN, only the Government of Australia (GOA), among ultimate troop contributors, had become actively involved in the counterinsurgency operations there. In 1962, GOA provided a 30-man army training team which had been integrated into the US advisory effort.⁷

(S) Initially the GOA had imposed certain restrictions regarding use of Australian troops in combat operations. In June 1965, for example, the first Australian battalion to arrive came under the operational control (OPCON) of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade for use only in the defense of the Bien Hoa base area east of Saigon. In October 1965, the restriction was lifted to permit Australian combat units to be employed anywhere in the III Corps Tactical Zone. The Australians were not, however, to become involved in any incident along the Cambodian border.⁸ In June 1966 the Australian Task Force, which by then contained two infantry battalions and supporting units, was put under the OPCON of Commanding General, II Field Force, Vietnam (FFORCEV).⁹ New Zealand forces (an artillery

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[battery later augmented by two infantry companies) were under OPCON of COMUSMACV and were, in turn, placed under the OPCON of the Australians.¹⁰

(S) During the mid-1966 time frame, the Australian-New Zealand contingent was committed to Phuoc Tuy Province southeast of Saigon. The move, designed to establish a long-term tactical area of responsibility in a locale needing reinforcement and to facilitate development of both a major base camp and a logistics complex, was understood by all parties concerned to be permanent. Since that time, as a matter of political preference on the Australian side, the task force has remained within this area except for a few occasions on which it has operated in immediately adjacent areas in coordination with other allied forces. OPCON remained with Commanding General, II FFORCEV, but the restriction on deployment relegated this authority to a formality for all intents and purposes.¹¹

(S) Recurring Australian public and political sensitivity to casualties made its influence felt on what became a consistently modest scale, tempo and intensity of task force effort, albeit a highly professional one. New Zealand sensitivities on this score appear to have been of lesser magnitude, but composition of the task force was such as to give the New Zealand element no separate operational identity.¹²

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(U) HMAS Hobart, a guided missile destroyer later rotated with HMAS Perth, was under the national command but served "as an additional ship of the United States Navy, without operational restrictions." The Royal Australian Air Force Canberra squadron and Caribou detachment remained under Australian authority for command and administration but under the OPCON of the US Air Force units with which they worked.¹³

Republic of Korea

(TS) The command and control relationship with Republic of Korea Forces, Vietnam (ROKFV) required very considerable attention, tact and diplomacy on the part of COMUSMACV. Under the provisions of the military working agreements of February and September 1965, between Commander, Republic of Korea Military Assistance Group, Vietnam (ROKMAGV) and COMUSMACV, the initial Korean unit, the "Dove" civic action contingent, functioned under the operating parameters established by the FWMAPC.¹⁴

(TS) With arrival of initial ROK Army and Marine Corps combat units in 1965, however, it soon became evident that the ROK forces desired to avoid any written arrangement placing them under the OPCON of COMUSMACV. Underlying this development was ROK

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domestic political concern that such an arrangement might conote subordination to the US in a mercenary capacity. COMUSMACV reached an agreement with the Commanding General, ROKFV -- successor to ROKMAGV -- that Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) directives sent to him would be phrased as requests, but would be honored as directives. Although ROK officials in RVN continued for a time to affirm this arrangement orally,¹⁵ in reality they observed an autonomous position vis-a-vis both MACV and the GVN, relying on mutual cooperation and coordination as the basis for conduct of military business. This circumstance placed General Westmoreland in a particularly awkward and difficult situation in that during the course of a visit to the ROK in September 1966, he had been told personally by President Park that non-publicized OPCON was in effect. Obviously, however, ROK governmental instructions did not reflect this understanding.¹⁶

(TS) Although appearing on the surface to be nominally satisfactory, the cooperation/coordination formula could have been improved. A US corps commander, commenting on his command and control problems with the ROK Marine Brigade, singled out several points that have general application to relations with ROK forces countrywide over an extended period:

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[- The ability of MACV to influence the military and pacification activities in the ROK tactical areas of operation is limited;

- With the controlling ROK headquarters located in Saigon, reaction time is slowed because of need to seek guidance from higher headquarters so far away; and

- ROK operations often are out of phase with province military and pacification programs by virtue of ROK inclination to conduct independent operations.¹⁷

(TS) Although intensely and justifiably proud of their progress subsequent to communist invasion of their homeland in June 1950, and mindful of their pioneering role as an Asian nation coming to the aid of a threatened ally, it was evident from the outset that ROK forces deployed to RVN were intent on holding the US to every commitment -- real, implied or imagined -- relating to government to government agreements concerning support of the ROK effort. This has been, and continues to be, the source of excessive administrative involvement and diversion of command attention.¹⁸

(TS) Tightly governed by policy guidance from Seoul through Commander, ROKFV, the ROK forces have gone through periods in

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[which their orientation has borne no resemblance to demands of the war. At times they have ceased all but local security operations in effort to eliminate casualties during periods of domestic political sensitivity; at other times they have changed abruptly their relations with the South Vietnamese populace, officialdom and military in their areas of deployment; consistently, they have taken root in their agreed areas of responsibility and, with only minor exceptions, have made their considerable strength unavailable outside those areas. Regrettably, their teamwork with Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces, including territorials, has been tenuous at best, token contributions to training of those forces notwithstanding.¹⁹

(TS) Command and control of ROKFV naval and air elements in RVN has been retained by Commander, ROKFV. Whereas coordination with US, GVN and other FWMAF has presented no problems of consequence, the type and levels of US support have been at issue periodically.

Philippines

(C) Command and control of the Philippine contingent presented relatively few problems since their effort revolved around provision of civic action assistance to the RVN in the single province of Tay]

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Ninh. The Commanding General, PHILCAGV, exercised direct command of his forces, whose mission was formalized by a FWMAPC composed of Commanding General, PHILCAGV; COMUSMACV; and the Chief, RVN JGS.²⁰ U

(TS) As a prelude to PHILCAGV's arrival in RVN commencing in October 1966, a potentially serious political crisis involving the area to which the unit was to be assigned made its appearance.

Whereas planning at one stage contemplated introduction of PHILCAGV into Hau Nghia Province near Saigon, the location was changed to Tay Ninh Province as a result of military level coordination. A key factor in this modification related to mutual desire to build on previous Philippine experience, contacts and community relations in Tay Ninh Province in connection with Project "Brotherhood" (a US sponsored undertaking in which Philippine technicians were employed to assist the GVN). Through further coordination, including an on-the-ground survey of Tay Ninh Province by representatives of the Philippine Government, the issue was settled amicably at governmental level.²¹

(C) Domestic political pressures, stimulated by resurgence of Huk dissidence, plus disagreement with the level of US support, induced the Republic of the Philippines to withdraw PHILCAGV from RVN in 1969 and 1970.

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[S] In 1966 the Royal Thai Government (RTG) announced it would support the war effort in the RVN " to help oppose Communist aggression when it is still at a distance from our country." ²² Initially, a regimental combat team was provided under the designation Royal Thai Volunteer Force, Vietnam (RTVFFV). By 1969 this force increased to the 10,500 man "Black Panther" (later redesignated "Black Leopard") Division, whose headquarters was established at Camp Bearcat east of Saigon, and whose tactical area of operations generally lay between US units in the Bien Hoa-Long Binh area and the Australian-New Zealand Task Force in Phuoc Tuy Province.

(U) Command of the RTVFFV was vested in the Commander, RTVFFV, designated by the RTG. He in turn was under Commander, Royal Thai Forces, Vietnam, a joint commander with headquarters in Saigon. Combined coordination was achieved at the latter level through a FWMAPC whose basic function was to develop, prescribe and synchronize the general concept of employment of the Thai ground, naval and air elements on a basis acceptable to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (as agent of the GVN), MACV and the RTG.

(C) Commander, Royal Thai Forces, Vietnam and COMUSMACV were to consult on a continuing basis to determine general mission

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[Assignments, insure establishment and maintenance of arrangements calculated to facilitate mission accomplishment, and resolve matters of mutual interest relating to the RTV FV. OPCON of the operating elements of the RTV FV nominally were to be vested in COMUSMACV and exercised through the appropriate field force commander.²³

(C) Initially, Thai ground forces were placed under the OPCON of Commanding General, 9th US Infantry Division; later of Commanding General, II FFORCEV. Here again, however, activities of the RTV FV, largely defensive in nature until early 1971, were governed for the most part by guidance from Bangkok. The real-world relationship was one of coordination, with the key to Thai responsiveness residing rather importantly in the personality of the field force commander and his relationship with the RTV FV commander.²⁴

(C) Small Thai Navy and Air Force detachments, while under direct Thai command, have been satellited for all intents and purposes onto counterpart US units in the interest of operational cohesion and support. The Thais have on occasion manifested sensitivity against mission assignment procedures that appear to subordinate their contingents to US units.²⁵]

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(U) Upon request of the GVN, the Republic of China Military Advisory Group, Vietnam (ROCMAGV) was activated on 7 October 1964, to assist the RVNAF in establishing a political warfare (POLWAR) system, training POLWAR cadre and conducting a POLWAR program. Within the combined matrix, a FWMAPC was established to provide an appropriate system of control.²⁶ Although COMUSMACV is a member of the council and has agreed to provide ROCMAGV with selective logistic support, the group's activities are largely bilateral in nature, ROC-GVN.

US ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO FREE WORLD TROOP CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES

(S, NOFORN) With the exception of GOA and Government of New Zealand (GNZ) forces deployed to the RVN, the US has defrayed costs generated by the FWMAF on a "cost-plus-incentives" basis.

Philippines

(S) In the case of PHILCAGV, it has been estimated that the cost to the US was \$39 million between 1967 and 1969, or approximately \$26,000 per man. In return, the PHILCAGV performed acceptably on the construction projects it undertook. More could have been done. Further, the same work could have been accomplished with ARVN and US resources.²⁷

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(C) The Philippine contribution essentially was political in nature -- addition of another "flag." Concerning continuation of PHILCAGV in the RVN, the US Embassy had this to say:

. . . On balance, therefore, we feel that we should not ourselves take any initiative to maintain PHILCAG in Vietnam. If we relent and acquiesce to the Philippine demands that we pick up the entire check, we will only serve to make it impossible to demand that PHILCAG improve its performance, since one does not preface an effort to shape up a unit by begging them to stay. 28 U

Thailand

(S) The Thailand "flag" also costed out at a high level. As agreed in 1967, the US undertook to assist the RTG in deploying a division for combat in RVN and to assist in maintaining and improving Thai forces in Thailand. The division was to be fully equipped, including basic loads, allowed to retain its equipment upon return to Thailand, and all of its personnel paid an overseas allowance by the US. All costs associated with preparation, training, maintenance, equipment, transportation, supply and mustering-out of the Thai forces sent to Vietnam were assumed by the US. Improvements agreed to within Thailand included a HAWK battery (equipment, training and construction), additional helicopter resources and an increase in Military Assistance Program (MAP) funds for 1968 and 1969 from \$60 million to \$75 million. 29

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(TS) In that the ROK provided the largest combat force (50,000 men), the cost thereof to the US has been higher than for any other Free World country. This in turn relates to a decision made in Washington in 1964 that the US would be willing to underwrite whatever was needed to enable ROK combat forces to take part in the war.³⁰ Subsequently, one US report estimated that under this policy the RVN effort provided the ROK with 20 percent of its foreign exchange earnings in 1969 alone.³¹

(S) Among incentives given to the ROK Government "to see that the integrity of Korea's defense is maintained and strengthened and Korea's economic progress is further promoted," were those to:

- Modernize ROK forces in Korea;
- Finance all additional costs for the forces deployed to the RVN;
- Expand the ROK arsenal for increased ammunition production in Korea;
- Provide for exclusive ROK use of communications facilities between Seoul and Saigon;
- Assume costs of overseas allowances for ROK forces in RVN;

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- Provide death and disability gratuities of RVN casualties at double the previous ROK rates;

- Pay the cost of mobilizing and maintaining in Korea extra reserve forces;

- Suspend the MAP transfer program for as long as substantial ROK forces remain in the RVN;

- Increase technical assistance to the ROK in the field of export promotion; and

- Give ROK preferential treatment for construction and employment opportunities in the RVN.³²

Australia - New Zealand

(C) Australia and New Zealand forces have been self-supporting except for common use items supplied in country, plus some hardware provided during initial outfitting to meet the peculiar environment of the RVN. Those common items supplied by the US were paid for by both GOA and GNZ on a reimbursable basis.³³

CONCLUSIONS

(TS) Unilateral political factors, plus constraints imposed by the principal Free World troop contributing countries on employment of their forces in RVN have diminished the effectiveness of FWMAF.

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the latter's potential contribution and the viability of combined command and control arrangements.

(TS) In the case of the Philippines, ROK and Thailand, it is evident that economic gain at US expense has weighed as heavily, if not out-weighed, commitment to containment of the threat to the national life of the RVN. Here again, one witnesses a circumstance that has worked to the disadvantage of FWMAF effectiveness and potential.

(U) The foregoing notwithstanding, the "more flags" policy did produce additional forces to confront aggression in RVN. These forces have contributed in varying degree to the war effort, while increasing their material posture in so doing. Moreover, they have strengthened the anti-communist front of the Free World.³⁴

(U) A centralized, integrated combined command apparatus encompassing all allied forces in RVN is impracticable on political grounds and by virtue of formidable organizational requirements.

(U) Allied command and control arrangements that have evolved in RVN have provided a reasonable, though not wholly satisfactory, basis for coordination and cooperation among all Free World elements within the limits established by political facts of life.

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CHAPTER III

THE BUDDHIST UPRISING IN 1966 (U)

PURPOSE

(U) The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the impact of the 1966 Buddhist uprising on military operations, particularly in the I Corps Tactical Zone (I CTZ), * Republic of Vietnam (RVN).

APPROACH

- (U) This chapter addresses the 1966 crisis with emphasis on:
- Developments leading to the uprising;
 - Diminished effectiveness of government in RVN during the crisis;
 - Reduced level of military activity directed against Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces; and
 - Diversion of military resources to cope with the crisis.

DEVELOPMENTS

(S) During the period 1 November 1963 to 28 February 1966, an extremely close interrelationship existed between political developments in the Government of Vietnam (GVN) and military operations. Basically, political instability, as attested to by a succession of short-lived regimes, carried over into the domain of military operations. Throughout the period Buddhist pressure was a major factor contributing to instability.

*Subsequently redesignated Military Region 1.

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(S) Following the overthrow of the Diem regime on 1 November 1963, Major General Duong Van (Big) Minh headed a military junta (Military Revolutionary Council - MRC) that moved to stabilize the government. However, lack of aggressive leadership within the MRC led to a bloodless coup on 30 January 1964 by Major General Nguyen Khanh, II Corps Commander. These successive developments had a devastating effect upon the morale and efficiency of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). Throughout Khanh's regime turmoil within the country continued. After seven months, frustration and growing dissatisfaction, primarily among politico-religious factions, led to riots and the formation of a new caretaker government on 16 August 1964, pending establishment of a national congress. At this point, governmental machinery ground to a standstill. An unsuccessful coup attempt on 13 September 1964 triggered early establishment of a High National Council headed by a civilian premier, Tran Van Huong. In December 1964, however, a group of young military officers, the "Young Turks," formed an Armed Forces Council (AFC) to advise the Government and illegally abolished the High National Council. In turn, a Buddhist uprising resulted in Khanh's reassumption of leadership on 27 January 1965. In the face of opposition to his role, Khanh stepped aside on 12 February for civilian Phan Huy Quat, but remained

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in the government. Continuing pressure caused Khanh to leave Vietnam on 25 February and the AFC to be dissolved on 6 May.¹

(C) In June 1965 a military junta, known as the National Leadership Committee (NLC), headed by Lieutenant General Nguyen Van Thieu as chairman and Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky as premier, assumed direction of the GVN. This arrangement provided a relatively stable environment into early 1966. However, four continuing sources of unrest were:

- Basic dissatisfaction with rule by decree;
- Continuing political differences between Catholics and Buddhists;
- A growing Buddhist sensitivity to the increasing American presence; and
- A worsening economic situation, which overshadowed all other factors.²

(U) On 15 January 1966, in response to growing pressures and unrest, Premier Ky announced that the armed forces had assumed power to create conditions for setting up a genuine democracy. He also stated that the main targets for the GVN in 1966 would be:

- To win the war;
- To pacify and reconstruct rural areas;

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- To stabilize the economic situation; and
- To build democracy.³

(C) For the next several weeks unrest was at a minimum except in the I CTZ. In the ancient capital of Hue, militant Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang, using alleged GVN suppression of Buddhism as a springboard and benefitting from some assistance provided by the I Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Nguyen Chanh Thi, continued to rally followers. In contrast, Saigon Buddhist leader Thich Tam Chau remained quiescent, reportedly because he thought Ky was doing an acceptable job.⁴

(C) Then on 21 February, Ky announced a cabinet reshuffle, reiterated that a Democracy Building Council soon would be appointed, stated that adoption of a constitution would be subject to popular referendum, and proclaimed that election of a national assembly would follow in 1967. In the wake of this development Thich Tam Chau maintained that the cabinet reshuffle favored the Catholics, and that he could neither support the GVN nor counter the opposition of the militant Buddhists. Thich Tri Quang, among his anti-GVN pronouncements, stated that the regime was "more hopeless than ever," and that "a way must be found to restore retired General Tran Van Don (a Buddhist) to a position of political prominence."⁵ At this point the stage was set for four months of intense political and military confrontations.

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(S) On 3 March, Premier Ky arrived in Hue to investigate the allegation that Lieutenant General Thi, in concert with retired General Don, was engaged in political activity directed against the government. The meeting between Ky and Thi on 4 March resulted in a heated dispute. Thi ignored Ky's suggestion that he forego political aspirations and seek to improve relations with the people.⁶

(S) At a special meeting of the NLC on 10 March (with Thi present), Ky moved that Thi be replaced as Commanding General, I Corps, because of insubordination. This was approved. The Republic of Vietnam Army (ARVN) 1st Division Commander, Major General Nguyen Van Chuan, was then appointed Acting Commanding General, I Corps. He was the second of five generals to hold that position during the period March-May 1966.⁷

(S) Upon announcement of the relief, Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), instructed all United States (US) commanders to counsel their RVNAF counterparts to accept Thi's dismissal and to concentrate on getting on with the war.⁸

(S) The events which followed during the balance of March bore a striking similarity to the events of May 1963, which ultimately had led to the downfall of the Diem regime. The Buddhists used the Thi

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dismissal as an opportunity to strike out against the Ky regime and to call for a civilian council to serve as a national assembly.⁹

(S) Reaction to the dismissal began in Danang on 11 March when 2,000 persons, including ARVN personnel, took part in a peaceful demonstration in support of Thi. Over the next several days additional demonstrations took place in Danang and Hue, and the tone became increasingly belligerent. At this juncture the I Corps "Military and Civilian Struggle Committee," which included ARVN personnel, instigated a general strike in Danang for the period 13-16 March. The strike was 90 percent effective and closed the civilian port. A follow-on general strike occurred both in Hue and Danang on 23 March.¹⁰

(S) During this period Buddhist agitation continued to develop and grow in scope throughout the country, aided and abetted in some cases by the communists. Hue and Saigon were the centers of Buddhist activity. Reinstatement of Thi, who had been allowed by the GVN to return to Hue, became secondary to the more inclusive effort on the part of Buddhist leaders to undermine the Ky regime.¹¹

(U) On 26 March, Premier Ky warned that continued disturbances not only would cause serious military problems, but possible loss of allied confidence and support as well. He also warned that 5,000 enemy troops had infiltrated into the northern two provinces in the past two months, that the I CTZ food situation was serious, and that strikes

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had slowed supply of fuels and weapons to military installations.¹²

(S) Subsequently, on 29 March, Premier Ky announced that the GVN intended to move to restore authority in I CTZ. On 30 March, the Département of State in its turn recommended that the US Mission urge the GVN to isolate and arrest agitators and to discipline or transfer key military personnel involved.¹³

(S) At the beginning of April, the US Mission reported that Buddhist "struggle" forces virtually had taken the levers of power in Danang and Hue; moreover, that hard core (struggle movement) elements had been established in most I CTZ towns and villages.¹⁴

(S) Meanwhile, US and Republic of Korea forces continued to seek out the enemy.¹⁵ RVNAF combat contact, however, dropped off sharply. RVN casualties countrywide for the week of 3-9 April were 278, the lowest weekly total since February 12-19, 1964 in the wake of the Khanh Coup.¹⁶

(TS) A COMUSMACV appraisal on 4 April noted that the I Corps Commander's control of the 1st ARVN Division and the Danang Garrison was doubtful. The report also stated that the Danang Police were unreliable and that the Hue Police had gone over to the struggle movement. The Commanding General, I Corps estimated that popular support of the movement varied from approximately 10 percent in the countryside

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to 70 percent in Hue.¹⁷

(TS) During the night of 4-5 April, two Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC) battalions were flown to Danang in United States Air Force aircraft. A third battalion soon followed. However, the VNMC units did not move against the struggle forces but remained on Danang Airbase in a show of force. At the height of the confrontation, significant local forces, including artillery and tanks, were deployed for possible use against the VNMC. As it developed, no fighting took place, GVN authority was not restored, and the last VNMC battalion was removed from Danang on 12 April.¹⁸

(S) On 8 April, Ambassador Lodge provided a detailed analysis of the situation that stated in part: "Buddhist demands, when stripped of hypocrisy and cant, boil down to a naked grab for power. . . the unity of the government is severely threatened, and effectiveness of the armed forces is in question."¹⁹

(S) In mid-April, following the withdrawal of the VNMC, the situation calmed somewhat but remained potentially explosive. RVNAF logistical activity experienced major disruption and combat operations against the enemy virtually ground to a halt. The struggle movement, with General Thi's open support, continued to consolidate its strength.²⁰

(TS) It was in this setting that the GVN initiated a unilateral move

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on 15 May. Spearhead forces consisting of two VNMC battalions and an ARVN airborne battalion were airlifted to Danang and immediately launched an operation to restore GVN authority. Because of their vulnerability in this situation, US aircraft were evacuated from Danang Airbase on 21 May. GVN authority was successfully restored on 23 May and the operation concluded.²¹

(S) During this period several US installations were the accidental victims of fire delivered by both the struggle forces and GVN forces. US personnel took appropriate protective measure, and at one stage averted what could have been a dangerous situation by threatening to return fire. Twenty-three US personnel were wounded. US aircraft returned to Danang on 25 May.²²

(S) RVNAF casualties in the Danang operation were estimated at 150 killed, 700 wounded; an estimated 500 civilians were treated for injuries.²³

(S) As events in Danang wound down Hue took on the appearance of an armed camp and the level of violence there increased sharply. Demonstrations increased in Saigon, at times closing down sections of the city.²⁴

(S) On 30 May the GVN moved against dissident elements in Hue with military and police contingent. In response the militants introduced

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a non-violent technique of placing family altars and Buddha statues in the street and sitting around them to block traffic. Normal traffic was disrupted, but not stopped. The police took action to clear essential roads.²⁵

(C) Initial efforts having failed to achieve desired results, the GVN on 15 June moved the ARVN 5th Airborne Battalion into Hue where, in conjunction with riot police, it moved in earnest against the struggle movement. Steadily reinforced thereafter, the GVN forces successfully concluded the operation on 19 June. The 1st ARVN Division was returned to an active combat role in support of the GVN by 28 June.²⁶

(C) A final spasm of extremism developed in Saigon on 18 June when a policeman was clubbed to death and a second dragged into the Buddhist Institute. After the latter had been sealed off by the 38th ARVN Ranger Battalion, GVN troops and police moved into the Institute on 23 June, rounded up 530 persons, seized a quantity of weapons and apprehended the man who murdered the policeman.²⁷

(S) At this point, Premier Ky stated that insofar as he was concerned, the immediate political crisis had been solved. He added that the GVN was preparing for elections, fighting inflation and had resumed operations against the VC.²⁸

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ASSESSMENT

(U) In his report on the war in Vietnam as of 30 June 1968,

General W. C. Westmoreland stated:

If any generalization can be made about the war in South Vietnam, it is that the US effort, both military and political, prospered to the extent that the government of Vietnam was strong, coherent, and active. The corollary, of course, is that none of our efforts had any chance of success in the periods during which the government of Vietnam was weak, divided, and thus ineffective.²⁹

The relevance of this appraisal to the struggle movement of 1966 is manifest.

(S) The campaign against President Diem, among other things, had given the Buddhists a new sense of unity and an appetite for power. That factor constituted a continuing obstacle to GVN effectiveness from 1 November 1963 to 1 July 1966. During the uprising, revolutionary development suffered an extensive retardation in I CTZ; to a lesser but nonetheless damaging degree in neighboring II CTZ. No effective action was taken to combat the continuing inflation. Frequent changes in the I Corps Commander, who was also senior GVN representative for the area, precluded meaningful continuity of military efforts in I CTZ.

(S) During 1966, NVN infiltration reached a high point in mid-summer with introduction through the demilitarized zone into I CTZ of the NVA 324-B Division. Country-wide, 73 percent of the NVA

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input was accomplished in the first six months of the year, with February, March, May, and June being the high months. During July, the first NVA regimental size attack occurred in I CTZ. Fifty-eight percent of the VC initiated incidents occurred in the first half of the year, March being the high month. Although there is no known evidence of a "de facto truce" with the enemy in I CTZ for the period in question,³⁰ it is apparent that the enemy exploited the opportunities presented to him by GVN preoccupation with the crisis.

(S) RVNAF operations.

- VNMC. Diversion of two battalions to the Danang area forced delay of an amphibious operation.

- VNAF (Vietnamese Air Force). Thirty-five percent of the transport capability during May was diverted to the Danang area. VNAF fighter aircraft were diverted periodically during the period.

- ARVN. The 1st ARVN Division and Danang local forces concentrated their attention on support of the struggle movement throughout the period. ARVN psychological warfare effort in I CTZ ceased. The staff of I Corps steadily decreased, reaching a low of, approximately 50 percent at the end of the period. Operations against the VC/NVA decreased markedly.³¹

(S) US operations:

- No coordinated US/RVN operations were conducted during the crisis in the 1st ARVN Division's area of responsibility nor in

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Quang Nam Special Sector (coterminous with Quang Nam Province south and west of Danang).

- Attention of senior US commanders was shifted from operations against the VC/NVA to the GVN internal political problem.

- Three US Marine Corps battalions, in company with necessary support, were diverted from their primary combat role to provide a ready reaction force.³²

(U) In his book, Strange War, Strange Strategy, General Lewis Walt, Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force, makes this comment about the Buddhist uprising: "In only a few days most of what we had accomplished in almost a year appeared to collapse. The American forces found themselves nearly alone in trying to maintain some semblance of order in a hopelessly complex situation."³³

(U) However, General Walt went on to state that: "When it was over, the bonds between ourselves and the Vietnamese were strengthened. We had been together in the crisis and together we faced the future more closely than we had before."³⁴

(U) Looked at another way, the uprising can be seen as the end of a long political campaign. As Sir Robert Thompson observed:

I caused some surprise, when asked what I thought of the Buddhist uprising against Prime Minister Ky in the spring of 1966, by replying that it was a form of an election. Ky's position depended

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on whether he still had the power to remain in power. That was being put to the test. He had, and the Buddhists lost the election. Their support just melted away.³⁵

CONCLUSIONS

(C) The period November 1963 - June 1965 saw a steady decline in the effectiveness of the GVN. Coups and counter coups had a debilitating effect on RVNAF morale and fighting esprit. The relative stability of the GVN for the period June 1965 to January 1966, made possible largely by increased US assistance and introduction of combat forces provided some improvement. By virtue of its timing and duration, however, the 1966 Buddhist uprising was particularly detrimental to the war effort. The GVN was not yet strong enough to cope with two national problems simultaneously, that is, VC/NVA aggression and the Buddhist crisis. The government, of necessity, concentrated on the latter, thus according the VC/NVA benefit of reduced pressure against them.

(C) The fact that elements of the RVNAF, particularly in I CTZ, were forced to choose sides during the confrontation weakened the total military structure considerably. In addition to the immediate impact, there was the longer term requirement to restore confidence, reinstill loyalty and heal scars left by the struggle.

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(C) On the US side, a determined effort to keep pressure on the VC/NVA notwithstanding, operations in I CTZ virtually came to a standstill. The requirement for increased security for US installations, interruption of logistical support and need to guard against a sudden and determined attack by VC/NVA forces combined to render significant US military operations into VC/NVA controlled areas temporarily out of the question.

(C) Although many of the original political problems remained, the GVN emerged from the Buddhist confrontation considerably strengthened. Increasing prestige, authority, cohesiveness and stability of the central government became major contributing factors to the steady improvement in prosecution of the war. Under new leadership and with benefit of close working arrangements with US units, I Corps, 1st ARVN Division and 2d ARVN Division overcame the divisive effects of the episode and moved to the front rank of effectiveness among all RVN forces.

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CHAPTER IV

EFFECT OF TRUCES ON UNITED
STATES AND ALLIED OPERATIONS (U)

PURPOSE

(U) Beginning with Christmas 1965 through May 1971, there have been twenty truces announced by the United States (US), the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), North Vietnam (NVN), and Viet Cong (VC) forces in RVN. This chapter will analyze their effect on US/allied operations, with special note being taken of consequences attending the VC/NVN truce violation of TET 1968.

APPROACH

(U) This chapter will embrace four aspects of the truce question as related to effect on US/allied operations. First, presentation of selected background data to include political/military considerations. Secondly, TET 1968 will be briefly reviewed with emphasis on overall effects on the allies and the enemy. Additionally, opposing views on the significance of TET 1968 will be presented to indicate the divergent opinions held by the military, the US public and US political leaders. Finally, note will be taken of truces since 1968, and propaganda efforts by both sides pertaining to truces will be reviewed briefly.

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BACKGROUND

(U) A truce, by definition, is the cessation of active hostilities for a period agreed upon by the belligerents. Rather than being a partial or temporary peace, it is a suspension of military operations to the extent agreed upon by the parties. A truce is binding upon the belligerents from the time of the agreed commencement, but officers of the armies concerned are responsible only from the time they receive official information of its existence.¹ In Vietnam, however, all truces have been the result of unilateral announcements. No agreements have been reached between the belligerents concerning the timing or implementation of the truces. (See Appendix.)

(U) In the conflict being waged in RVN, truce observance entails formidable difficulties. There are no well-delineated front lines; opposing forces invariably are in a mobile, shifting configuration. Enemy communications with his scattered guerrilla and local force units are uncertain. Interpretation of truce terms is subject to considerable variation by all parties. Additionally, as Sir Robert Thompson points out, "In People's Revolutionary War, the breaking of a truce, or for that matter, the provisions of a treaty, is a perfectly legitimate ruse of war."² These considerations notwithstanding, first the enemy and subsequently the US and Government of Vietnam (GVN), acting unilaterally, have utilized the propaganda

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value of truce proposals in efforts to further their respective aims and interests.

(U) For the most part the Vietnam truces relate to a period of traditional religious or historical observance -- Christmas; the Western New Year; TET, the celebration marking the beginning of the Lunar New Year; and Buddha's birthday. Therefore, it is to be underscored that, initially, truces at these periods were tied not only to the propaganda objectives, but to the pragmatic consideration of troop morale, particularly as regards TET. Traditionally, Vietnamese military personnel have been granted leave to return to their families for these annual celebrations, and the continuation of this practice in a wartime environment produced rewards not unlike the US military "R&R" (rest and recuperation) program. Moreover, the enemy has consistently used all truce periods as an opportunity to resupply, redeploy and refit. Therefore, the requirement for vigilance during truce periods has curtailed radically the granting of leaves for Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF).

POLITICAL-MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

(U) Late in 1965 the VC announced a Christmas truce. In response, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, speaking for the US and RVN Governments, announced that:

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- Air operations over NVN would be suspended for a 24-hour period during Christmas.

- All other military operations would be limited to defensive actions during the same 24-hour period.³

(U) The suspension of air operations over NVN subsequently was extended, and the US employed what began as a truce of undetermined duration to dispatch high ranking emissaries to various capitals of the world to investigate the possibilities of achieving a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam war.⁴

- On 31 December 1965, Pope Paul VI sent messages to Moscow, Peiping, Hanoi, and Saigon urging national leaders to seek an end to the Vietnam war. These messages were made public on 1 January 1966.⁵

- Even though the US effort for a negotiated settlement was denounced by the North Vietnamese press as a "noisy propaganda campaign,"⁶ US efforts in support of negotiation along with suspension of air operations continued until 31 January 1966.

(U) Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC) commented to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on the difficulties stemming from short-notice extension of a truce. He also pointed out the advantage to the enemy of being able to move freely to improve his military posture during the truce. He went on to suggest that future truces be

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planned in detail well in advance and to propose that aerial observation of key installations in NVN continue during any truce.⁷

(U) The theme of military disadvantage was to appear with predictable regularity as later truces were proposed and/or agreed to by the Governments of the US and RVN for political and psychological reasons.⁸

(U) Anticipating a Christmas truce proposal for 1966, the JCS informed the Secretary of Defense on 22 November 1966, that they opposed any stand down in military operations during the Holiday season. The JCS indicated that if a truce was directed, any bombing stand down should be limited to a maximum of 48 hours in order to minimize the military advantages to the enemy, and that, if there was no indication of NVN's willingness to negotiate, we should be allowed to strike unusual military targets in NVN which might develop. This action by the JCS supported the positions of CINCPAC and Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) on this matter.⁹

(U) As TET 1967 approached, intelligence indicated that the enemy had anticipated and calculated in their planning the probability of a bombing pause during TET. Over five days of truce were observed in this instance, and the enemy took advantage of the period to conduct

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major resupply operations and to reconstitute and replenish his forces. Intensive friendly photographic reconnaissance conducted over NVN, supplemented by aerial sightings from ships and aircraft, revealed that NVN moved by sea and land between 22,300 and 25,100 tons of supplies to logistical base areas in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and to transshipment points just north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).¹⁰

PRE-TET 1968

(U) In late 1967, no official US position had been announced concerning a Christmas or New Year's stand down when Radio Hanoi stated that the National Liberation Front (NLF) was ordering a suspension of military attacks from 23 to 26 December 1967 for Christmas, from 29 December 1967 to 1 January 1968 for the New Year, and from 26 January to 2 February 1968 for TET. Subsequently, on 15 December 1967, the GVN announced a 24-hour Christmas truce for the allied forces which went into effect as announced. On 30 December an additional announcement by the GVN proposed a New Year's truce from 31 December 1967 to 2 January 1968. The latter included a 12-hour extension added by the GVN in response to an appeal by Pope Paul VI to make 1 January 1968 a "day of peace." Prior to these truces, there were clear indications that the enemy planned to take advantage of them. Pilot sightings recorded truck movement from NVN into the DMZ and Laos at almost ten times that sighted during the same Holiday truces in 1967.¹¹

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(U) A notable problem relating to exercise of initiative in proposing truce periods was that posed by need for multi-national coordination on the friendly side. Delays imposed by this requirement often enabled the enemy to establish the parameters for both the terms and duration of a particular truce. While the allies did not elect necessarily to honor the exact duration of NVN-announced truces, generally they honored the particular Holiday period, often at sacrifice of potential political and psychological advantage that could have accompanied a first move on their part.

TET 1968

(U) After the Communist announcement that a 6-day truce was to be observed by North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and VC forces for TET 1968, the US and the GVN responded by agreeing only to a 36-hour truce (1800 hours, 29 January to 0600 hours, 31 January).

(S) Because of Communist use of past truce periods to further their military aims, and by virtue of broad intelligence indicators available to him, COMUSMACV took the following actions:

- Requested that five northern provinces of the RVN located in I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) be exempted from participation in the truce because of the high level of enemy movement indicated in and around these areas.¹² President Nguyen Van Thieu agreed to this request.

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- Reinforced the Khe Sanh garrison with an additional US Marine Corps battalion.

- Shifted the 1st Air Cavalry Division to the Thua Thien area from II CTZ.

- Moved a brigade of the 101st Airborne Division to I CTZ.

- Recommended that one Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) airborne battalion and two Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC) battalions be moved to Saigon.

- Placed the 199th Light Infantry Brigade on security operations around the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex.¹³

(C) The intelligence indicators, as reflected in more comprehensive intelligence estimates, forecast the following probable VC/NVA high threat areas:

- In I CTZ, the enemy had the capability to launch coordinated attacks throughout the CTZ with a principal threat at Khe Sanh.

- In II CTZ, attacks by fire and sapper attacks were probable in Kontum and Pleiku Cities.

- In IV CTZ, an increase in enemy activity in Dinh Tuong, Phuong Dinh and Chuong Thien provinces could be expected.¹⁴

(U) These estimates proved to be valid to a degree not anticipated by the intelligence analysts. The violation of the TET 1968 truce was

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unparalleled, compared with prior and subsequent violations by Communist forces. The enemy had gained tactical surprise.

(U) General Westmoreland subsequently reported that, although he was certain that a major offensive was planned by the enemy at TET, he had not surmised the true nature or scope of the country-wide attack.¹⁵

(S) Ambassador Bunker stated before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that a substantial offensive was expected about the time of TET, but he frankly admitted that the enemy's military capabilities and intentions were underestimated.¹⁶

(U) Just minutes after the beginning of TET in the early morning hours of 30 January 1968, the NVA and the VC launched a series of ground attacks against provincial capitals and friendly military positions and installations in I and II CTZ's. These were followed by major attacks on similar targets throughout the RVN during the nights of 30-31 January. The intensity and magnitude of these attacks accelerated and for several days the NVA/VC had over 60,000 troops engaged in combat in the cities and against allied military installations throughout the country. During the period 30 January to 25 February, when the last NVA unit was driven from the old imperial capital of Hue, the communist forces had boldly attacked

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34 of 44 provincial capitals, dozens of lesser towns, many military installations and the US Embassy in Saigon.¹⁷

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TET

(U) An assessment of the effects of TET 1968 from a military viewpoint reveals the following:

- The enemy offensive was exceedingly costly to the VC/NVA in men, materiel and morale. In the first two months of 1968 he had lost over 55,000 killed in action (KIA) (two-thirds of the total for 1967) and over 13,000 weapons. VC/NVA losses in hardcore, irreplaceable cadre were high.

- Performance of Regional and Popular Forces was heartening.

- Although the enemy had been defeated militarily and in terms of his immediate political objectives, the cost to the RVN in civilian lives and property lost was tragic, particularly in population centers such as Hue and Saigon.

- With US urging, the GVN established a relief program that offset the fomenting of internal uprising and dissent by the VC infrastructure.¹⁸

- The South Vietnamese populace was galvanized into a higher order of awareness of the enemy threat. This translated

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into an effective national mobilization program that permitted replacement of combat losses and expansion of the indigenous armed forces as consistently urged by COMUSMACV.¹⁹

~~(FOUO)~~ At the annual meeting of the American Ordnance Association, on 18 November 1968, the Chief of Staff, United States Army had the following to say on the significance of TET.

The RVNAF, instead of disintegrating and defecting, fought well and with determination. They successfully defended off the enemy's attack, defeated him, and emerged from the battle with new pride, self-confidence, and resolve. The TET offensive, while a "Pearl Harbor" for the Vietnamese was for the enemy and for us more a "Battle of the Bulge." In retrospect, it was actually a very fortuitous development for the allies. It enabled, if not forced, much progress to be made that otherwise would have taken years. Not only did it unify the people, strengthen the government, instill confidence in the Vietnamese Armed Forces and solidify the country, it allowed us to inflict damage to the heretofore elusive enemy of a magnitude never before approached.²⁰

(U) Despite the success of the RVNAF and the allies from a military viewpoint, it was apparent that among the press, the public and government officials there was appreciable variance in interpretation of TET 1968. For example, Joseph Buttinger, in his Vietnam, A Political History, says: "Almost overnight, the TET offensive had wiped out the picture drawn by the Administration at the end of 1967, while emphatically confirming almost everything the critics of the Administration had been saying for the past three years."²¹

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(U) For reasons that have yet to be surfaced in their entirety, much less understood by the public at large, the news media on the whole seized upon TET 1968 to magnify their consistently negative portrayal of US involvement in Vietnam, Administration objectives, policy and programs related thereto and efforts aimed at fulfilling the mission assigned to the Armed Forces. Significantly, that this continues (with but isolated exceptions) to be the media's thrust is not the outgrowth of the events and ramifications of TET 1968; rather, the latter provided a convenient vehicle for exploitation of a persuasion already well founded. Whereas the occasional views of a Joseph Alsop might be advanced in support of Administration endeavor and the military appraisal of the situation, the general line presented to the public is portrayed succinctly by David Brinkley's statement that: "Fifty percent of the American people dislike the way the war is being run now; it is hard to see why it is not one hundred percent."²²

(U) Outspoken anti-war judgments by members of Congress were brought to the attention of the world and the American public:

- Senator Robert F. Kennedy offered the judgment as of 8 February 1968 that the TET attacks had "finally shattered the mask of official illusion with which we have concealed our true circumstances, and that a military victory was not in sight and that it probably will never come."²³

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- Senator Albert Gore, in a 17 February 1968 statement advocating US extrication from the morass of Vietnam: "We are destroying the country we profess to be saving."²⁴

(U) In contrast to the foregoing, another point of view was expressed by Dr. Henry A. Kissinger in "The Vietnam Negotiations," an article published in Foreign Affairs in January 1969:

To be sure, from a strictly military point of view, TET was an American victory . . . But in a guerrilla war, purely military considerations are not decisive; psychological and political factors loom at least as large . . . The TET offensive was a political defeat in the countryside for Saigon and the US.²⁵

(U) Still another significant view was presented by Mr. Eugene V. Rostow, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, on 20 February 1968:

. . . . During the TET offensive the Communists suffered tremendous military losses. Their purpose in these attacks was not a purely military one. Their primary purpose, rather, was to weaken, or even destroy the Government of South Vietnam. For the Communists know, and we must never forget, that if they ever did succeed in destroying the constitutional elected political authority in South Vietnam, they would indeed have won the war. They would have won it even if the Khe Sanh, a Dakto, a Loc Ninh, or any other point in geography, and dozens of others to boot, were successfully defended. The [NVN/VC] did not succeed in their maximum goals. The popular uprising which they told their troops would occur in the cities never materialized. Indeed, the urban population of Vietnam has clearly demonstrated it is not willing to throw in its lot with the Viet Cong. This was a failure, hopefully, a revealing failure to the Vietnamese Communists. But we cannot say yet whether or not it was a decisive failure.²⁶

(U) Dr. Kissinger later addressed the impact of TET in these terms:

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The TET offensive marked the watershed of the American effort. Henceforth, no matter how effective our actions, the prevalent strategy could no longer achieve its objectives within the period or with force levels politically acceptable to the American people. This realization caused Washington for the first time, to put a ceiling on the number of troops for Vietnam. Denied the very large additional forces requested, the military command in Vietnam felt obliged to begin a gradual change from its peripheral strategy to one concentrating on the protection of the populated areas. This made inevitable an eventual commitment to a political solution and marked the beginning of the quest for a negotiated settlement. Thus the stage was set for President Johnson's speech of March 31, which ushered in the current negotiations.²⁷

POST-TET 1968

(U) Subsequent to TET 1968, truces have been announced by both sides for all major holidays and for special undertakings related to release of prisoners of war. Total incidents initiated by the enemy during these periods and casualties resulting therefrom continue to be instructive (reference again is made to Appendix).

PROPAGANDA EFFORTS

(U) The enemy has used the truce ploy as a propaganda vehicle. The allies in turn have not been insensitive to rewards available to them. A typical example relates to December 1969. On 5 December 1969, the VC Liberation Radio (clandestine) made the following announcement:

. . . So long as the US imperialists remain stubborn, our people will continue to fight resolutely in compliance with President

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Ho's teaching in which he urged our people to fight until the Americans leave and the puppets topple in order to win complete victory. However, as in previous years, basing itself upon its unchanged humanitarian policy, upon its respect for the customs and habits of our people and the people of other countries, and upon its deep concern for the feelings and legitimate aspirations of our compatriots, the American people, the peoples of other countries, and large numbers of US, puppet, and satellite troops, and to create adequate conditions and provide sufficient time for our compatriots and for the puppet, US and satellite troops to prepare for and participate in the celebration of Christmas and New Year's Day 1970, the Republic of South Vietnam Provisional Revolutionary Government has decided to cease military attacks on the puppet, US, and satellite troops for 3 days over Christmas . . . and for 3 days over New Year's Day.²⁸

(U) Asked to comment on the proposition that the Government of the NLF had given its troops a three-day truce for Christmas and a three-day truce for the New Year, the Office of President Thieu (GVN) gave the following reply [Press Release of 6 Dec 69]:

. . . Only the Communist lackeys who want to lend a hand to the enemy in order to kill the soldiers and innocent people still believe in the Communists' good will to have a truce. We have to remember that during Christmas and New Year of the previous years, the Communists always proposed in a false manner to have a longer truce than our side's truce, with the sole purpose to violate it in order to increase the killing of our soldiers and innocent people . . . In conclusion, the President confirms that he maintains his decision to have a 24-hour truce as announced on December 4, 1969, and the President thinks that for humanitarian purposes the 24-hour period is sufficient.²⁹

(U) Illustrative of the friendly counter to the enemy's continuing endeavor to generate propaganda advantage through exploitation of truces is this 1968 Military Assistance Command, Vietnam message:

On December 2, President Thieu announced a Christmas ceasefire for the period 241800 December to 251800 December. The

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Free World forces will also observe this cease-fire. Because of the short duration of this cease-fire it is not considered feasible to conduct any special PSYOP program for friendly or enemy forces. However, the cease-fire period does lend itself to the following themes:

- Point out to enemy soldiers that they have fought honorably and the cease-fire offers an opportunity to rally with dignity and accept the good treatment due a courageous soldier.

- Emphasize that a permanent cease-fire would be possible if the North ceases its aggression.

- The cease-fire does not mean a relaxation in security by the GVN and her allies. Violators will be repelled at tremendous cost to the enemy.

On December 5, the Liberation Radio announced they would have two periods of cease-fire. The first from 240100 December to 270100 December, the second from 300100 December to 200100 January. To avoid publicizing the announcement, avoid all mention of the NLF proclaimed cease-fire in all PSYOP output.

If previous enemy cease-fire violations are exploited, avoid giving the impression the enemy still has the capability to launch attacks at will.³⁰

CONCLUSIONS

(U) The enemy has yet to honor in full a truce in Vietnam. On the contrary, he consistently has used these periods to enhance attainment of his political and military objectives. Duplicity thus is identified as a routine and highly important element of his make-up and modus operandi.

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(U) The one major effort to channel a truce into negotiations aimed at lasting peace was unsuccessful despite initiatives on the part of leading world figures and earnest diplomatic endeavor by the US. Meanwhile, cessation of bombing for a 37-day period proved to be a windfall for the enemy in terms of respite, recuperation, and preparation for future campaigning.

(U) US and allied forces consistently have been placed at a military disadvantage during truce periods. Not only has the enemy used these occasions to resupply and reposition his forces, but he has employed them for conduct of operations under circumstances favorable to him. Over the years, however, the consistent pattern of enemy violations has served to produce heightened vigilance and pre-planned countermeasures on the part of friendly forces with resultant lessening of disadvantage.

(U) The enemy's 1968 TET truce violation appears destined to take its place in history as a major strategic error. Apart from failure to achieve the intended objective of a mass uprising against the Saigon regime and the penalizing effect of heavy losses, infrastructure included, the episode provided the "Pearl Harbor" needed to rally the South Vietnamese populace and armed forces. Nonetheless, the anomaly of US and Free World psychological dismay produced by the

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enemy's initiative, audacity, and strength -- however short-lived -- provided telling support to anti-war sentiment, particularly in the US.

(U) Use of truces in connection with prisoner of war releases is justifiable and desirable.

(U) Since TET 1968, establishment of holiday truces has become pro forma on both sides. Each side endeavors to gain political and psychological advantage through the timing, duration, and publicity associated with its unilateral position vis-a-vis the other.

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CHAPTER IV
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VIETNAM TRUCE PERIODS

OCCASION	ANNOUNCEMENT		INCIDENTS		CASUALTIES			
	OUR SIDE	THEIR SIDE	TOTAL	MAJOR	US KIA/WIA	ALLIED* KIA/WIA	VN CIV KILLED/WD	ENEMY KIA/WIA
¹⁹⁶⁵ CHRISTMAS	241800 - 251800 Dec <u>A</u>	241900 - 250700 Dec <u>F</u>	84 <u>A</u>	None Re- ported <u>S</u>	0/6 <u>S</u>	12/8 <u>S</u>	3/12 <u>S</u>	5/0 <u>S</u>
¹⁹⁶⁶ TET	201200 - 231800 Feb <u>A</u>	20-23 Jan <u>C</u>	106 <u>A</u>	26 <u>S</u>	13/36 <u>D</u>	57/112 <u>S</u>	17/39 <u>S</u>	242/2 <u>S</u>
CHRISTMAS 5/34 <u>A</u>	240700 - 260700 Dec <u>A</u>	240700 - 260700 Dec <u>B</u>	81 <u>A</u>	24 <u>A</u>	5/34 <u>A</u>	25/30 <u>S</u>	2/6 <u>S</u>	8/0 <u>S</u>
¹⁹⁶⁷ NEW YEAR'S	310700 Dec - 020700 Jan <u>A</u>	300100 Dec - 020100 Jan <u>G</u>	111 <u>A</u>	24 <u>A</u>	14/27 <u>A</u>	26/37 <u>S</u>	1/10 <u>S</u>	18/2 <u>S</u>
TET	080700 - 120700 Feb <u>A</u>	7 DAYS <u>C</u>	272 <u>A</u>	89 <u>A</u>	18/158 <u>A</u>	26/206 <u>S</u>	2/33 <u>S</u>	117/65 <u>D</u>
BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY	230100 - 232400 May <u>A</u>	220600 - 240600 May <u>F</u>	71 <u>A</u>	32 <u>A</u>	12/57 <u>A</u>	20/102 <u>S</u>	10/30 <u>S</u>	51/16 <u>A</u>
CHRISTMAS	241800 - 251800 Dec <u>A</u>	240100 - 270100 Dec <u>B</u>	118 <u>A</u>	40 <u>A</u>	2/24 <u>A</u>	7/45/14 <u>H</u>	2/12 <u>S</u>	33/6 <u>H</u>
¹⁹⁶⁸ NEW YEAR'S	311800 Dec - 020600 Jan <u>A</u>	300100 Dec - 020100 Jan <u>B</u>	117 <u>A</u>	55 <u>A</u>	27/205 <u>A</u>	58/115 <u>S</u>	3/16 <u>S</u>	307/- <u>D</u>

* Includes US.

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VIETNAM TRUCE PERIODS (CONT)

OCCASION	ANNOUNCEMENT		INCIDENTS		CASUALTIES			
	OUR SIDE	THEIR SIDE	TOTAL	MAJOR	US KIA/WIA	ALLIED KIA/WIA	VN CIV KILLED/WD	ENEMY KIA/WIA
<u>1968 (Cont)</u> TET**	291800 Jan - 011800 Feb A (Truce Called Off At 300930 Jan)	270100 Jan - 030100 Feb A	40 D***	15 D	1,308/8,183 R	3,507/11,726 R	4,300/17,800 E	17,341 R
CHRISTMAS	241800 - 251800 Dec A	240100 - 270100 Dec F	113 A	47 A	2/36 A	9/61/18 H	5/15 S	33/1 H
<u>1969</u> TET	161800 - 171800 Feb A	150700 - 220700 Feb F	196 A	84 A	8/94 A	16/137/0 I	None Reported S	211/19 I
BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY	300600 - 310600 May A	290700 - 310700 May F	158 A	85 A	13/62 A	24/189/8 J	0/5 S	139/9 J
CHRISTMAS	241800 - 251800 Dec A	240100 - 270100 Dec F	115 A	61 A	0/3 A	21/72/5 N K	0/7 N	101/13 A
<u>1970</u> NEW YEAR'S	311800 Dec - 011800 Jan A	300100 Dec - 020100 Jan F	115 A	61 A	6/14 A	26/55/12 L K	4/5 L	167/3 A
TET	051800 - 061800 Feb A	050600 - 090600 Feb F	113 I	39 I	3/20 I	20/77/0 I	10/18 S	136/19 I
BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY	081200 - 091200 May J	NONE F	205 J	90 J	1/25 J	25/156/7 J	22/133 S	196/9 J

** Casualties for period 30 Jan-25 Feb 68
*** Incidents only to time of suspension of truce.

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VIETNAM TRUCE PERIODS (CONT)

OCCASION	ANNOUNCEMENT		INCIDENTS		CASUALTIES			
	OUR SIDE	THEIR SIDE	TOTAL	MAJOR	US KIA/WIA	ALLIED KIA/WIA	VN CIV KILLED/WD	ENEMY KIA/WIA
<u>1970 (Cont)</u>								
CHRISTMAS	241800 Dec - 251800 Dec <u>M</u>	240100 - 270100 Dec <u>F</u>	88 <u>Q</u>	47 <u>N</u>	0/4 <u>N</u>	16/52/3 <u>K N</u>	1/3 <u>N</u>	32/7 <u>N</u>
<u>1971</u>								
NEW YEAR'S	311800 Dec - 011800 Jan <u>B</u>	300100 Dec - 020100 Jan <u>B</u>	85 <u>L</u>	48 <u>L</u>	1/11 <u>L</u>	13/64/0 <u>L</u>	0/2 <u>L</u>	63/3 <u>L</u>
TET	261800 - 271800 Jan <u>K</u>	260100 - 300100 Jan <u>B</u>	117 <u>Q</u>	58 <u>Q</u>	1/3 <u>Q</u>	18/41/14 <u>Q</u>	6/5 <u>S</u>	60/16 <u>Q</u>
BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY	081200 - 091200 May <u>P</u>	080700 - 100700 May <u>B</u>	78 <u>Q</u>	45 <u>Q</u>	3/11 <u>Q</u>	23/54/2 <u>Q</u>	10/20 <u>S</u>	35/14 <u>Q</u>

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CHAPTER V

POLICIES GOVERNING THE USE OF AIR POWER

PURPOSE

(U) This chapter addresses the effects of nonmilitary considerations, primarily political, on the employment of air power in Southeast Asia (SEA).

APPROACH

(U) Emphasis is accorded analysis of policies governing air operations, the impact of these policies on military courses of action and their effect on the overall war effort. Among specific subjects to be examined are:

- The 37-day bombing halt commencing 24 December 1965;
- Partial cessation of air strikes against North Vietnam (NVN) on 31 March 1968;
- Cessation of air attacks against NVN beginning 1 November 1968; and
- Employment of B-52 aircraft.

(U) Although employment of air power in NVN, Laos, Cambodia and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) is interrelated, the evolution of air power employment policy has been such as to require a five-part

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analysis encompassing NVN, Laos, Cambodia, RVN and B-52 employment. Conclusions integrate the separate analyses.

PART I: NORTH VIETNAM

Retaliation

(TS) On 4 August 1964, after the second attack against US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin (the first having occurred on 2 August), CINCPAC requested the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to authorize punitive air attacks against selected targets in NVN. Based on approval at higher governmental level, the JCS instructed CINCPAC to conduct a one-time attack against North Vietnamese PT/Swatow boat staging areas and petroleum storage areas near Vinh. This undertaking was carried out on 5 August, utilizing resources of the US Seventh Fleet.¹

(TS) On the morning after the US strikes, General Nguyen Khanh, RVN Prime Minister, agreed for the first time to allow US jet aircraft into the Republic. He stated also that all Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) were on alert status ready:

- To attack NVN should the latter's forces attack to the south, or
- To attack Cambodia should an enemy threat develop there.²

(TS) To detect possible southern movement of enemy troops in NVN or movement of enemy elements into Laos, Commander, United

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States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) recommended on 6 August 1964 that photographic reconnaissance flights begin over NVN. Approval was not forthcoming.³

(TS) In early August, Ambassador Graham Martin, US Ambassador to Thailand, elicited an agreement from Thailand's Minister of Defense, Air Chief Marshal Dawee Chulasap, for launch by US Air Force (USAF) tactical air forces based in Thailand of combat sorties against targets outside that country. The authority granted was unlimited and included strikes against NVN. However, Ambassador Martin reported that approval was granted with reluctance, and emphasized the importance of discretion in its employment.⁴

(U) In addition to events that were influencing initial US policy on employment of air power against NVN, significant developments in RVN were providing the basis for hard decisions on American policy in SEA. In the minds of some in Washington, the time had arrived either to withdraw or to make a substantial commitment of US support.⁵ Political instability in the Government of Vietnam (GVN), the apparent intention of NVN to widen the war and weakness of the RVNAF were prime causes of concern. Moreover, US domestic political problems associated with the 1964 Presidential elections were generating reappraisals of overall US policy and strategy

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regarding Vietnam. In this uncertain and controversial setting the President seized the initiative by requesting a congressional resolution to express the unity and determination of the US in its support of freedom and protection of the peace in SEA.⁶ The result was the 7 August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which armed the President with the mandate to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States" and "to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requiring assistance in defense of its freedom."⁷

(TS) The Tonkin Gulf incidents and subsequent resolution heralded new emphasis on the role of air power. Initially, the retaliatory air strike became the order of the day. Under JCS auspices an operation order nicknamed FLAMING DART was developed for use in responding to possible governmental directives to carry out such strikes.⁸

(U) As a result of enemy attacks in Pleiku and Qui Nhon, RVN, in February 1965, both costly in US casualties, decision was made at governmental level to apply FLAMING DART. A joint USAF/South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) task force struck military targets and port facilities in NVN.⁹ The limited nature of the attacks emphasized that the US was committed to a restrained and moderate use of force,

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and was applying that force in response to specific communist violence directed at US troops.¹⁰

Change in US Policy

(U) At this point internal problems in RVN became paramount. The US Ambassador to RVN, General Maxwell D. Taylor, informed the President that the GVN was toppling, the economy deteriorating and infiltration from NVN increasing monthly. Something must be done. In his view there were two alternatives:

- Either the US had to withdraw, or
- It must increase its commitment to the South Vietnamese, entailing thereby major changes in US policy.¹¹

As an outgrowth of subsequent deliberation on the Vietnam issue, the decision was made to pursue essentially the course of action reflected in the second alternative.

(TS) Against the contingency that the US would increase its support of the GVN through application of air power against NVN, Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) had prepared a plan named ROLLING THUNDER whose objective, to use CINCPAC's words, was "to give a good clobbering to NVN"¹² through use of air strikes. As it developed, the Chief Executive authorized execution of ROLLING

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THUNDER operations, and the first strike was conducted on 2 March 1965. Recognizing that these operations marked a major change in US air policy, targets were tightly controlled by the President through the Secretary of Defense and the JCS. Heavy restrictions were placed on the manner of execution.¹³ (Map 1)

(TS-NOFORN) As March and April unfolded, several of the restrictive provisions were eased:

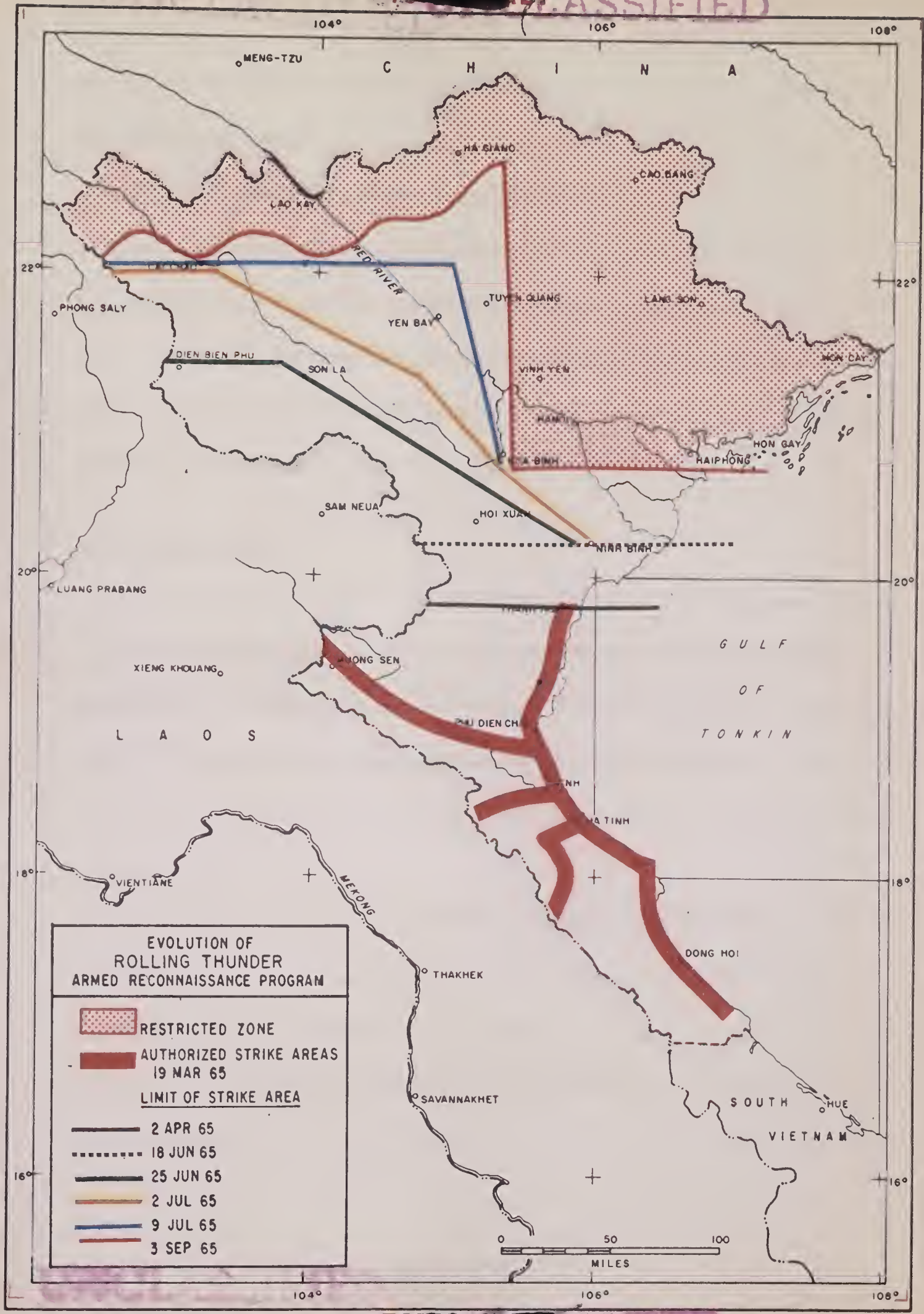
- Use of napalm in NVN was authorized;
- Strike missions against NVN were developed and approved on a weekly rather than daily basis;¹⁴
- USAF Thai-based tactical air was committed against NVN;
- Permission was granted to use additional aircraft to achieve a high damage level;
- Armed reconnaissance missions were inaugurated;
- US strikes were separated from VNAF missions; and
- Low-level and medium altitude bomb damage assessment reconnaissance was authorized.¹⁵

(TS-NOFORN) Although relaxation of operational restrictions heightened effectiveness of execution and improved the results achieved, they did not materially alleviate restrictions on targets.¹⁶ Choice of the latter, as recommended by the JCS, continued to be

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exercised at Presidential level, as did decision on mode, timing and weight of attack.

(TS) Reflected in the easing of restrictions was a shift of emphasis in employment of air power to make it more difficult and expensive for NVN to support the communist effort in RVN. Operations concentrated on conduct of attacks against the enemy's lines of communication (LOC), while at the same time maintaining additional pressure by attack of fixed military targets.¹⁷

First Suspension

(U) On 12 May 1965, to underscore efforts in the diplomatic field to stimulate initiation of peace talks with Hanoi,¹⁸ the President suspended air strike and armed reconnaissance operations against NVN.¹⁹ A special reconnaissance program was launched to observe the reaction of the NVN rail and road transportation system to the suspension.²⁰

(U) During the pause, CINCPAC submitted to the JCS a comprehensive recommendation on the future course of the air campaign. He considered it necessary:

- To weigh carefully the capabilities and limitations of US air power when it was required to operate within specific political

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parameters; and

- To assess the vulnerability of NVN within that framework.

He went on to propose a demonstration of the capability of air power through an around-the-clock program of immobilization, attrition and harassment of NVN military targets.²¹

(TS) With the suspension having failed to achieve its intended objective after four days, CINCPAC, based on evaluation of ROLLING THUNDER, suggested to the JCS that further respite for NVN would create future problems in RVN and Laos. He recommended resumption of ROLLING THUNDER,²² noting that air strikes conducted up to that point had not reduced NVN military capacities in any major way. The air campaign was resumed on 18 May.²³

(TS) With resumption of the strikes, authorization was received for armed reconnaissance from the Demilitarized Zone to the 20th parallel. Emphasis was placed on restricting traffic in and out of the important LOC hub at Vinh. Emphasis notwithstanding, operational and geographical restrictions still in effect kept the authorized sortie level below the military capability.²⁴

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Reappraisal

(U) It was clear by September 1965 that, despite considerable damage caused by air attacks in NVN, the North Vietnamese manifested no willingness to negotiate or terminate support of the VC.²⁵ This in turn generated increasing dialogue between Washington and the field on the subject of targetting restrictions. In late November, CINCPAC recommended destruction of major military targets in the northeast, including those in Hanoi and Haiphong, a disruption of major port facilities and subsequent increased armed reconnaissance directed at the road, rail, inland waterways and coastal LOC from China. His request was denied.²⁶

(TS) Many of the most lucrative targets on the JCS Target List, particularly in the Hanoi and Haiphong area had not been hit. Obviously, the effectiveness of the air effort would have been increased had strikes been directed against targets that constituted a major portion of the NVN war making and industrial capacity.²⁷ The fact that engagement of those targets finally approved and attacked had been long delayed enabled NVN to disperse key elements and improve its air defense capability in the target areas. This in turn caused greater pilot losses than would have occurred had the strikes been conducted early in the ROLLING THUNDER campaign in 1965.²⁸

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(TS) Despite restrictions on target engagement and geographical areas, ROLLING THUNDER operations during 1965 provided impressive statistical results. Over 3,000 moving targets were destroyed, including almost 700 railroad vehicles.²⁹ Potential destruction, had restrictions not been imposed on the employment of air assets, is relegated to the domain of speculation.

Second Suspension

(TS) In December 1965, CINCPAC advised the JCS that ROLLING THUNDER was not accomplishing its purpose. Soon thereafter, on 24 December, initially in conjunction with the 1965 Christmas cease fire and later in conjunction with US and international efforts in support of negotiations,³⁰ all ROLLING THUNDER operations were suspended a second time.³¹ Attention then shifted to the effect of ROLLING THUNDER limitations on NVN's surface-to-air missile (SAM) capability.³²

(U) In April 1965, photography revealed the first enemy SAM site under construction southeast of Hanoi. A second site appeared about a month later and by mid-July several more were discovered in various stages of construction, forming an irregular ring around Hanoi. Subsequently, the number of sites increased rapidly north

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of the 20th parallel. By the end of 1965, more than 60 sites had been discovered protecting the vital military-industrial complex around Hanoi and Haiphong and the LOC south to Thanh Hoa.³³ Relatively few of these were open to attack because of their location in restricted areas.

Resumption

(U) In early January 1966, CINCPAC forwarded a detailed discussion of the relationship of military operations in NVN to the overall strategy of the war in RVN. He gave it as his view that plans should be made to resume effective operations against NVN if negotiations did not bring an early cease fire.³⁴

(S) Concrete evidence of NVN's exploitation of the pause included:

- Daytime sightings of vehicles and trucks moving south of Vinh;
- Evidence that Hanoi had removed daylight restrictions on the movement of materiel;
- Construction activity apparently aimed at facilitating truck movement;
- Accelerated truck movement in southern NVN; and
- Communist activity within the Laos infiltration corridor.³⁵

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(U) On 31 January 1966, all peace efforts having been spurned by the enemy, air attacks on the north were resumed.³⁶

(TS) A January 1966 conference in Honolulu presided over by Secretary of Defense McNamara brought forth recommendations by his commanders for a stronger approach. Three tasks were proposed:

- Reduce, disrupt and harass the external assistance being provided to NVN;
- Destroy in depth those resources already in NVN which contributed most to the support of aggression; and
- Harass, disrupt and impede movement of men and materiel through southern NVN into Laos and RVN.

This concept required:

- Attacking and mining the harbors of Haiphong, Hon Gay and Cam Pha;
- Interdicting the two main rail lines leading from the Chinese border to Hanoi; and
- Concentrating attacks on destroying POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) systems, power plants and military facilities. The interdiction effort in the southern part of NVN was to be regarded as only a part of the overall package.³⁷

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(TS) Secretary McNamara saw things differently. He was satisfied that the limited 1965 offensive had achieved its objectives and believed that the campaign should continue at the same level. He viewed interdiction of the LOC's in southern NVN to be the key to achieving limited objectives rather than attacks on entry points and military stores of supplies farther north.³⁸ The outcome was a 1966 campaign closely resembling that of the previous year. Armed reconnaissance was authorized south and west of the restricted area (Map 2), but extensive limitations on the types of targets which could be struck remained in effect. In military eyes, these restrictions had the effect of creating a haven in the northeast quadrant of NVN into which the enemy with impunity could import vital war materiel, construct sanctuaries for his aircraft and strengthen his anti-aircraft artillery defenses around the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong.³⁹

(TS) Tasks for ROLLING THUNDER operations in 1966 were weighted in favor of interdiction as against disruption of external assistance and destruction of resources. At the Honolulu Requirements Planning Conference in June 1966, CINCPAC noted that major elements of the concept for an effective air campaign advanced in January had not been authorized.⁴⁰

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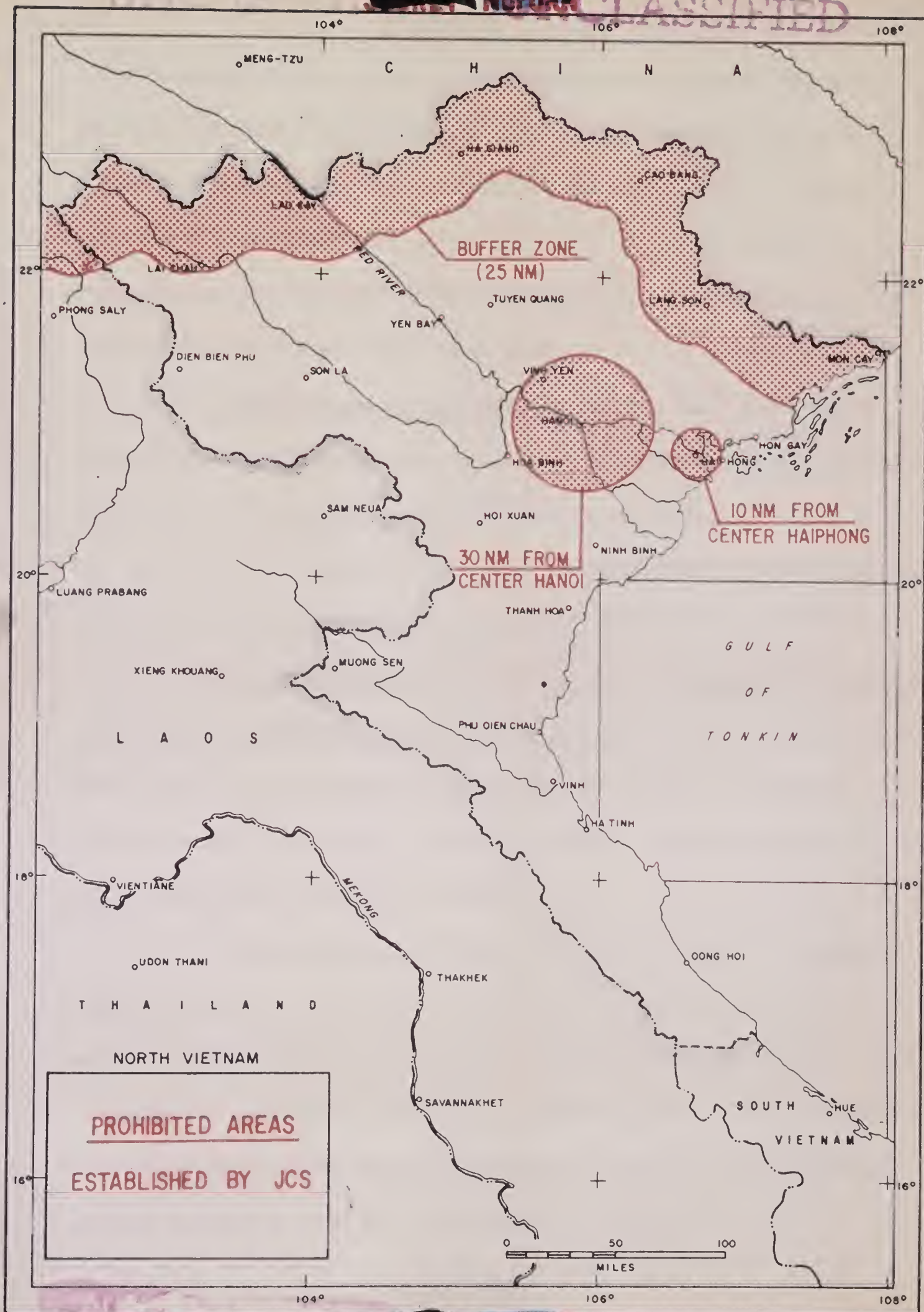
1966 - Restrictions Prevail

(TS) While the June conference was in session, CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that highest priority be given to strikes against POL facilities in NVN. Late that month the administration directed that air strikes be conducted against seven POL storage areas in NVN, including those around Hanoi and Haiphong. The political sensitivity of this escalation was mirrored in the stringent restrictions set down for the operation. After marginal weather delayed the first strikes, two-thirds of NVN's POL storage capacity was destroyed in a three-day period. Rather than press ahead on an integrated campaign basis to engage and inflict comparable damage on all other target categories, the governmental decision was to continue the doctrine of graduated pressure. With this one-time exception, previous restrictions on engaging the Hanoi-Haiphong area continued for the remainder of 1966.⁴¹

(U) Throughout the year proliferation of SAM sites continued. Discovery of additional sites raised the total to about 150. Continuous SAM coverage extended from Yen Bai to Haiphong in the north, to the Ha Tinh area in the south. Radar assets by the end of 1966 consisted of a well-balanced inventory of over 100 early-warning, ground controlled intercept, anti-aircraft artillery fire control and SAM-associated items.⁴²

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(TS) After reviewing again the results of ROLLING THUNDER, CINCPAC in late 1966 formulated a long-term concept emphasizing target systems but, more importantly, stressing a steady weight of effort on a sustained basis. Peaks and valleys typical of 1966 operations were to be avoided.⁴³ The review identified critical air power tasks and commented on each as follows:

- Reduce or deny external assistance. Very little was accomplished. Haiphong was out-of-bounds except for limited strikes against POL stores and facilities. This meant that the port was almost undisturbed though it handled 85 percent of NVN's 1966 imports, to include a broad range of war-making materiel.

- Increase Pressure by Destroying in Depth those Resources that Contributed Most to Support of Aggression. The results achieved were minor in comparison to what could have been accomplished. Of 104 JCS-numbered targets in northeast NVN, only 19 had been authorized for strike in 1965, and only 20 in 1966.

- Harassment and Disruption of the Movement of Men and Materiel to RVN. This mission consumed the greatest proportion of effort and was effective. Less than one percent of some 81,000 attack sorties were against JCS-numbered targets in 1966. Armed reconnaissance had absorbed the remaining 99 percent with the bulk of these sorties devoted to LOC harassment and disruption.⁴⁴

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Step-up in 1967

(TS) The first few months of 1967 saw a gradual liberalization of restrictions and targets applicable to ROLLING THUNDER. In January and February, strikes were authorized against dispersed POL and SAM support areas within the Hanoi/Haiphong restricted areas. In April, an expanded list of targets in the Hanoi area was approved. Strikes were authorized against air fields east and northwest of Hanoi, but they were limited to small and random harassment efforts. For the first time, however, US aircraft engaged in immediate pursuit of enemy aircraft were permitted to attack enemy air fields.⁴⁵

(TS) These changes represented a gradual expansion of the bombing phase of the war. For some, however, expansion was too gradual. The Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, in a Targeting Concept Review, asserted that the ROLLING THUNDER effort should not be expended on transient targets; rather, that the closing of the port of Haiphong should be accorded first priority.⁴⁶ In rejecting this view the Secretary of Defense contended that an intensive air campaign to interdict war-supporting materials risked a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union.⁴⁷

(TS) In July, however, a major change took place. For the first time, attacks were authorized against a total of 49 point targets in

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the buffer zone adjacent to Communist China and within the Hanoi/Haiphong "circles." Authority to strike additional targets within these areas was added in August 1967 in company with guidance that, in the interest of obviating charges of escalation from either foreign or domestic sources, these additional authorities would be exercised in a "measured manner."

(TS) The most active air effort against NVN occurred during August 1967.⁴⁸ A major campaign was launched to isolate Hanoi and Haiphong from each other and from the northern and southern logistic routes, by destruction of the main bridges in these areas. Numerous bypasses were put into operation and both truck and watercraft activity increased as NVN attempted to overcome the bombing effects. Large open storage areas multiplied throughout Haiphong. By October, some 200,000 tons of goods imported by sea had been accumulated and stacked in these areas.⁴⁹

(U) In all, ROLLING THUNDER operations in 1967 reflected progress toward full exploitation of air power, but did not apply continuing and steadily increasing pressure over an extended period of time. The objective was approached briefly only during the summer months -- a period wherein the air campaign began to exert its greatest impact on NVN. However, the pressure period was

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foreshortened, even as the enemy gave evidence of being hurt.⁵⁰

Restrictions Prevail Again

(TS) The ROLLING THUNDER operations order for 1968 indicated that campaigning generally would be harassed by restrictions characteristic of the pre-1967 period, and that the weight of effort would continue to be placed on interdiction of LOC's into RVN from the north.⁵¹

(TS) Rigidity of the restrictions for the coming campaign was the subject of a message from the Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF), to Commander, 7th Air Force. CINCPACAF stated that restrictions on US air operations in NVN were:

- Disadvantageous to allied forces operating in an extremely difficult air defense environment;
- Serving enemy aircraft to advantage;
- Providing sanctuaries the enemy was using to great advantage in Hanoi, Haiphong and throughout the LOC structure in NVN; and
- Inconsistent from a military point of view in light of US efforts in RVN.⁵²

(U) Apart from the restrictive effect of the administration's guidance, the air campaign in NVN during the first three months of

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1968, including post-strike reconnaissance, was curtailed drastically by the northeast monsoon.⁵³

Partial Halt

(TS) The periodic plea for more bombing latitude and for a relaxation of restrictions was pre-empted by Presidential decision. On 31 March, in a further attempt to get Hanoi to the peace table, the Chief Executive, by discontinuing strikes north of the 20th parallel, placed outside the reach of American air power precisely that area considered by military judgment to be most essential. Two days later the line was moved one degree southward.⁵⁴

(S) Hanoi was quick to exploit this new development. As rapidly as basic facilities could be rehabilitated, the center of military supply shipments moved from Hanoi/Haiphong to Thanh Hoa, 80 miles closer to RVN. Within two months, barreled POL in quantities exceeding any seen during the war appeared at Thanh Hoa. By May, activity at the Thanh Hoa rail yards had increased by 300 percent and water-way traffic had increased sharply. Farther north, the clogged Haiphong storage areas began to be cleared. Dredging operations picked up in that city's badly silted harbor. Ship turn around times decreased. Rail line repairs were accelerated from Communist China to Vinh.⁵⁵

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(S) During 1967 the concept of interdiction of logistics flow at choke points had been proven. Following the partial halt, this technique was used for an interdiction campaign in southern NVN. The traffic flow through the area between 18° - 19° North was fairly well established at the start of this campaign in April 1968, with Route 1A being the primary North-South LOC. The cessation of offensive air operations against North Vietnam on 1 November 1968 brought down the curtain on the most intensive interdiction campaign in the history of air warfare. When all bombing stopped on 1 November, the cumulative results of the campaign were impressive. There was no rail traffic south of 19°, and two major inland waterways (W14, W8) were interdicted, thereby preventing barge traffic from moving southward; truck sightings in the area south of the major interdiction points had dropped from an average of 82 trucks per day on 30 April, to 21 trucks on 1 November. Coastal traffic was negligible with only a few small junks occasionally attempting to slip down the coast at night.⁵⁶

Cessation

(TS) Effective 1 November 1968, reportedly as an outgrowth of international "understandings" reached in Paris, the US terminated

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all offensive operations against NVN and the DMZ, and within the contiguous 12-mile territorial waters claimed by NVN. New guidance provided for immediate pursuit into NVN territorial waters or air space in response to hostile acts, but US forces engaged in such pursuit were denied authorization to attack other hostile forces or installations encountered, except in response to an attack by them. US aircraft engaged in reconnaissance missions over NVN or operating in RVN were also authorized to attack, as a "protective reaction", any missile site or antiaircraft site which initiated hostile actions against US aircraft. In a later clarification of this rule, permission was extended to include those sites threatening by hostile actions allied aircraft operating in Laotian airspace.⁵⁷

(TS) Thus ended the ROLLING THUNDER campaign. In early 1968, just prior to the 1 April partial halt, there was reason to believe that graduated pressure through use of US air power against NVN had reached a point permitting maximum pay-off during the summer season of good weather. The partial halt limited this effort; the 1 November cessation ended it.⁵⁸

PART II: LAOS

(S) Any assessment of employment of air power in SEA must recognize the unique relationship of Laos to the war in RVN; namely,

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NVN use of Laotian territory for infiltration of men and supplies to RVN. Additionally, all US military air operations in Laos have been carried out by aircraft based in other countries in SEA. Moreover, they are controlled for all intents and purposes by the US Ambassador to the Kingdom of Laos.⁵⁹

Aerial Reconnaissance

(S) In March 1964, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recommended to the President, based on a JCS proposal, that the US launch reconnaissance flights over Laos. While the President approved the concept, it still required approval by Souvanna Phouma, the Premier of Laos.⁶⁰

(S) On 17 May 1964, communist Pathet Lao forces turned against Lao rightists and neutralists on the Plaine des Jarres in northern Laos. There followed a US decision that aerial reconnaissance might provide a means of proving that NVN and Communist China were assisting the indigenous enemy. Such evidence then could be presented to the International Control Commission (ICC) established by the Geneva Accords of 1954.⁶¹ COMUSMACV, finding need for reconnaissance of NVN infiltration activities in Laos, also had requested flights over the southern reaches of that country.⁶²

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(TS) On 18 May, the JCS transmitted authorization for the first US reconnaissance missions in Laos. Due to the international political sensitivity of the situation and to avoid violation of NVN air space, overflight of NVN or northern Laos was not authorized for these flights.⁶³ Operations began on the 19th with the Air Force concentrating on the panhandle of Laos and the Navy planes from the carrier Kitty Hawk flying over the Plaine des Jarres.⁶⁴

(U) Three days later, the US State Department announced that Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos, had requested reconnaissance flights in order to "observe the activities and movements of forces which are invading, attacking, and fighting in Laos."⁶⁵

(TS-NOFORN) The reconnaissance effort was christened formally in late May 1964 under the JCS-assigned nickname, YANKEE TEAM.⁶⁶ CINCPAC appointed COMUSMACV as coordinating authority. Prohibition against overflights of NVN remained in effect, but overflight restrictions applicable to northern Laos were removed. The purpose of YANKEE TEAM operations was twofold:

- Obtain intelligence information, particularly on border infiltration from NVN into Laos; and

- Remind friendly and hostile leaders of US military presence in the area.⁶⁷

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(TS) Communist gunfire downed two aircraft in early June 1964.

A retaliatory strike authorized by the administration against the enemy antiaircraft installation served to demonstrate that the US would continue reconnaissance in support of the Royal Lao Government, by force if necessary. Additionally, it served to reduce a number of operational constraints and to introduce the policy of armed response to enemy fire directed at reconnaissance aircraft. In particular, retaliatory strikes with air-to-ground rockets and conventional 750-pound bombs against antiaircraft units were authorized.⁶⁸ Under the prevailing rules, however, CINCPAC still was not able to use napalm or cluster bombs in attacking the enemy.⁶⁹

(U) Because of the extremely sensitive nature of the YANKEE TEAM and BARREL ROLL flights, the official comments concerning our activities were restricted to confirming the fact that US aircraft were flying reconnaissance missions over Laos, and that they engaged in combat only when fired upon. For the first time, President Nixon, in his 6 March 1970 policy statement concerning Laos, admitted officially that the US had been flying ". . . certain interdiction missions against invaders who were violating Lao neutrality."⁷⁰

(TS-NOFORN) An assessment of YANKEE TEAM after six months of activity indicated the operations had:

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- Verified with low and medium level photography suspected activities obtained from high altitude coverage;
- Forced the enemy to move at night, thereby slowing infiltration;
- Served as a reminder to friends and enemies of American presence in the area and our determination to stay; and
- Furnished information on enemy build-up, routes of infiltration and field locations.⁷¹

(TS) Following the downing of two additional aircraft in a three-day period, 18-21 November 1964, the operating rules were changed. The minimum altitude level was raised, and authority for low-level missions required approval on an individual basis.⁷² Despite the hamstringing effect of operational restrictions and excessive time involved in obtaining political approvals, progress thereafter was encouraging. Effectiveness of strike missions by Royal Lao Air Force (RLAF), as well as strikes by US aircraft operating in defense of reconnaissance flights, increased in direct proportion to intelligence produced by YANKEE TEAM.

Interdiction, 1964-65

(TS) In December 1964, the first US air interdiction mission against communist logistic activity in Laos was flown under the

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BARREL ROLL program.⁷³ (Map 3) Administration guidance, strongly influenced by the views of the US Ambassador to Laos, embodied a number of restrictive requirements:

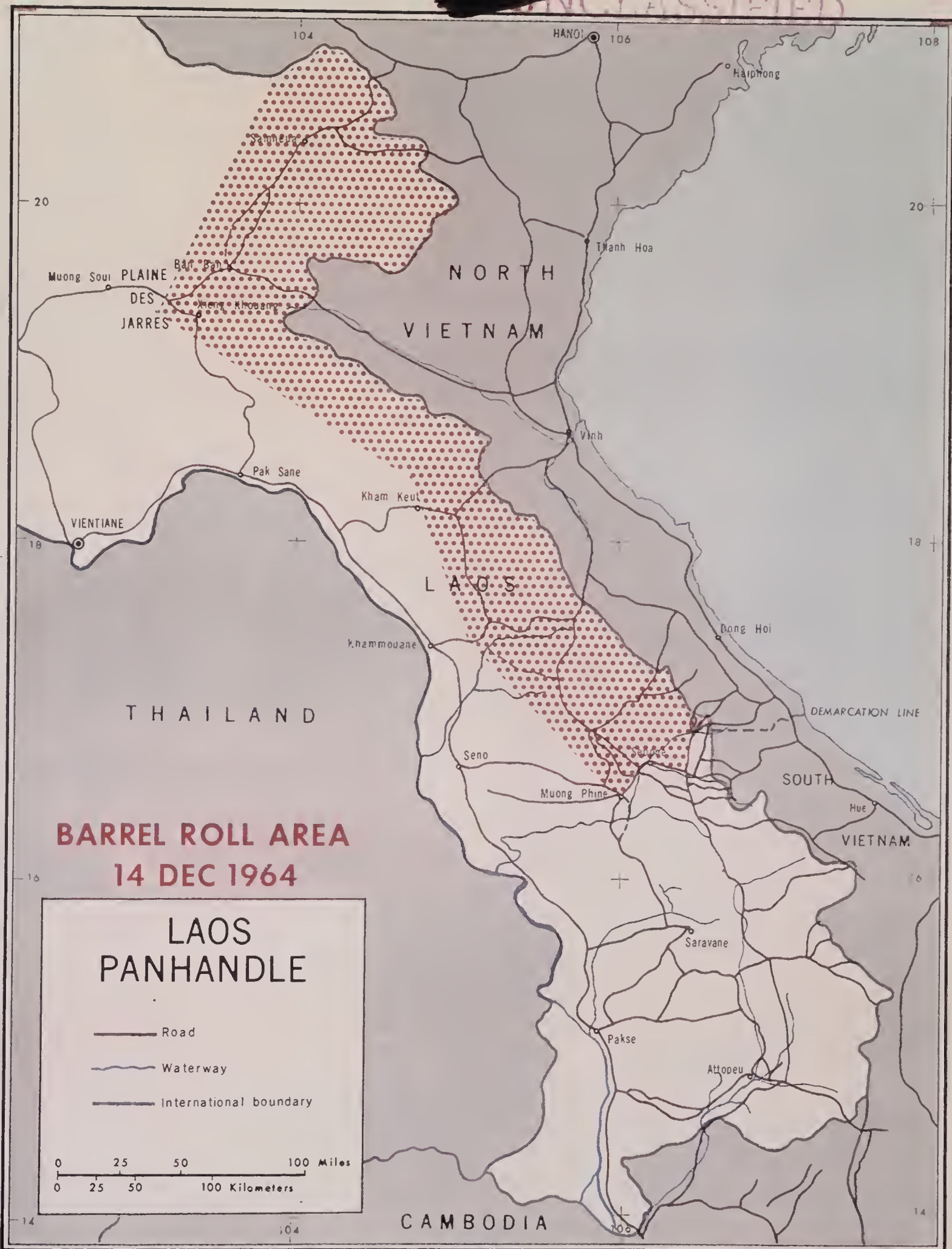
- Strikes were allowed only during daylight hours;
- Missions were limited to small numbers of strike aircraft committed infrequently;
- Use of napalm as a weapon was prohibited;
- Overflight of NVN was not permitted;
- A two-mile buffer zone was established along the Laos/NVN border; and
- All missions required final approval by the JCS.

(TS) In February 1965, MACV recommended that all such restraints be closely monitored since they created unnecessary restrictions on the responsible tactical air commander, notably the requirement for final JCS approval of all BARREL ROLL missions.⁷⁴ By mid-1965, many of the restrictions gradually had been removed or modified. Daily missions had become the rule.⁷⁵

(TS) STEEL TIGER, begun in April 1965 to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail (Map 4), was to be conducted under the same general ground rules as BARREL ROLL with one important exception -- napalm could be used when authorized by the Ambassador to Laos.⁷⁶

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(TS) YANKEE TEAM (reconnaissance) operations in the same area entailed:

- Control by CINCPAC;⁷⁷
- Prohibition on the use of napalm by escort aircraft; and
- Prohibition of attacks on trucks sighted by escort aircraft (the same trucks could be destroyed by interdiction aircraft).⁷⁸

(TS) As of mid-1965, the majority of BARREL ROLL and STEEL TIGER missions originated at US bases in Thailand. Approval to use these aircraft had been sought early in the BARREL ROLL program as being essential to the success of interdiction operations. However, due mainly to the Thai Government's reluctance to risk their status of nonbelligerence by authorizing combat strikes from its bases, this approval was withheld. As a result, the first BARREL ROLL missions were carried out by RVN - or carrier-based aircraft.⁷⁹

(TS) On 1 October 1965, in the wake of an unintentional strike in a Royal Lao Government (RLG) controlled area, all STEEL TIGER missions were discontinued until further notice by the US Ambassador (acting through the Air Attache in Vientiane).⁸⁰ The suspension was lifted on 20 November. Brigadier General George P. Snider, Director of Operations, 2d Air Division, told responsible commanders at that time:

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Air operations in Laos are extremely sensitive. It is absolutely imperative that your aircrews do not expend munitions outside of approved areas. There have been six instances since 20 November that violated rules of engagement. Laos is being utilized as a staging base for NVN military personnel and supplies into SVN. Continued violations will jeopardize US authority to attack enemy forces before they can engage our ground forces. You are responsible for the conduct of your strike crews and their compliance with (the) rules of engagement. There is no excuse that is acceptable for any attack outside an approved area . . .⁸¹

(TS) Meanwhile, the southern half of STEEL TIGER was designated TIGER HOUND and accorded procedural emphasis in an effort to speed up the validation of targets sighted therein (Map 5). TIGER HOUND aircraft were authorized to perform armed reconnaissance along the roads and motorable trails within the operational area. However, as specified by the US Ambassador to Laos and reflected in implementing guidance from Washington:

- Only targets of opportunity within 200 yards of a road could be struck;

- Infiltration trails or way-stations could not be attacked;⁸²

and

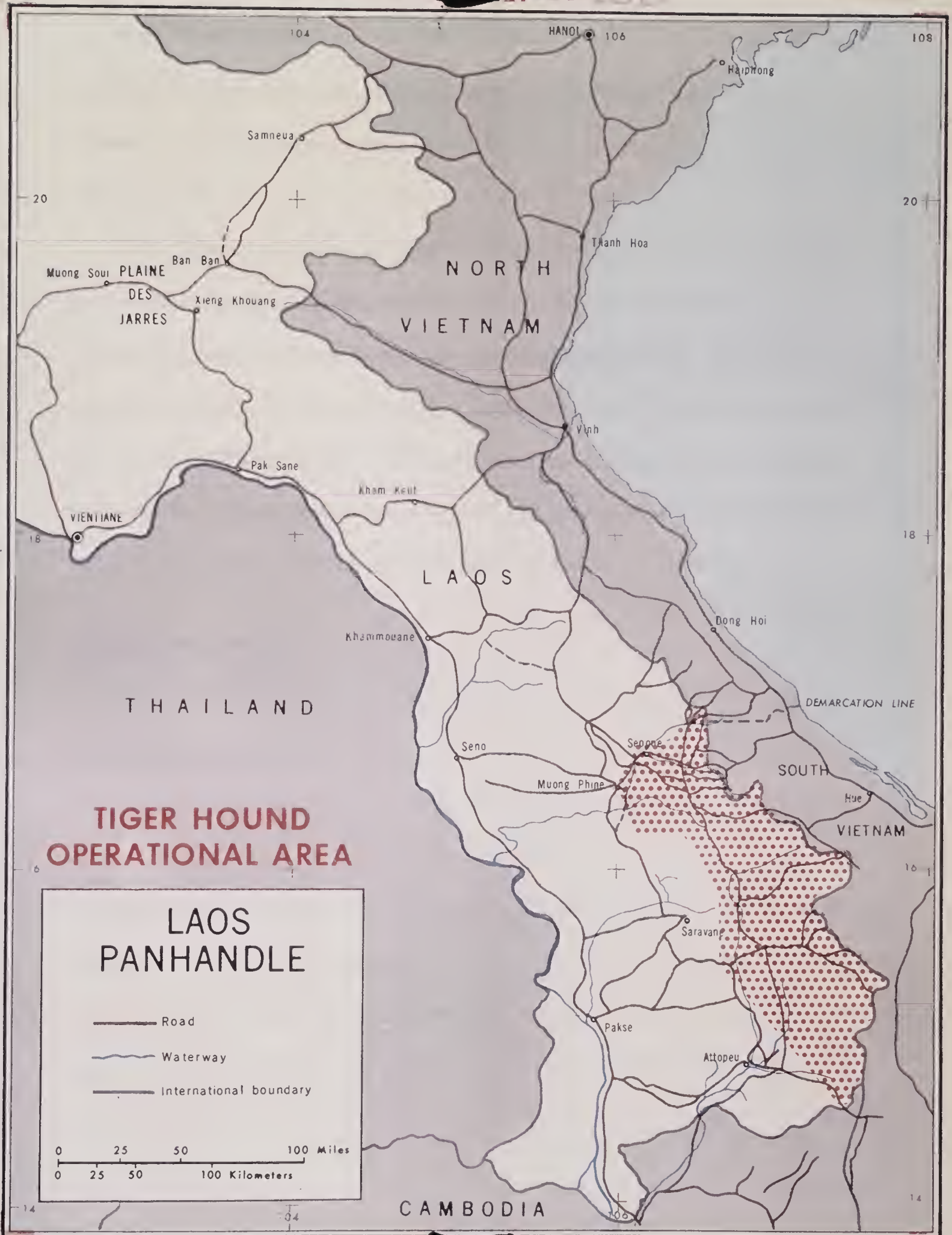
- Villages or built up areas, regardless of military value, could not be attacked without target validation by Vientiane or the RLAF.

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MAP NO. 6,043 JUL 70 ENGR USARPAC

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(TS) With respect to validation, even with the elaborate communications equipment aboard the Airborne Command and Control Center, including single side-band radio, the process was agonizingly lengthy.⁸³

(TS) The imposition of political restrictions on the interdiction program also must be considered. Armed reconnaissance over selected routes in Laos had been severely restricted. Political restraints made it impossible to strike the most significant areas in the southern Panhandle.⁸⁴ Restrictions placed on air operations, both reconnaissance and interdiction, degraded the effectiveness of US air power and diluted any measure of success achieved.⁸⁵

Interdiction, 1966-67

(TS) By 1966, the conflict in Laos had become two wars, each with different characteristics. The northern war was one of position and maneuver. In the panhandle, the US objective was interdiction of supplies passing from NVN to RVN.⁸⁶

(TS) The BARREL ROLL/STEEL TIGER rules of engagement for 1966 and the first two months of 1967 were relatively simple (Map 6). Within seven armed reconnaissance zones, US aircraft could strike any targets of opportunity that were outside villages and within 200

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yards of a motorable trail or road. Outside of these zones, however, heavy restrictions applied.⁸⁷

(TS) In March 1967, a major change of zones and rules for the STEEL TIGER area resulted from a series of highly publicized bomb incidents near the Laotian/RVN/NVN border. In an attempt to reduce the number of these incidents, the STEEL TIGER area was rezoned (Map 7) in favor of a north-south configuration.

- Zone I featured minimum restrictions, but 7th Air Force insisted on the use therein of a forward air controller (FAC) because "to the guy in the air the line on the map means nothing." This decision was illustrative of one of the main drawbacks of the new division -- its complexity.

- Immediately to the west was Zone II. Since it was more populous than Zone I, additional restrictions were imposed on the employment of air assets in it.

- The next area to the west, Zone III, was subject to more restrictions than Zone II.

- The remaining area, Zone IV, contained the bulk of the native population of southern Laos. Restrictions applicable to it were the heaviest of any in SEA.

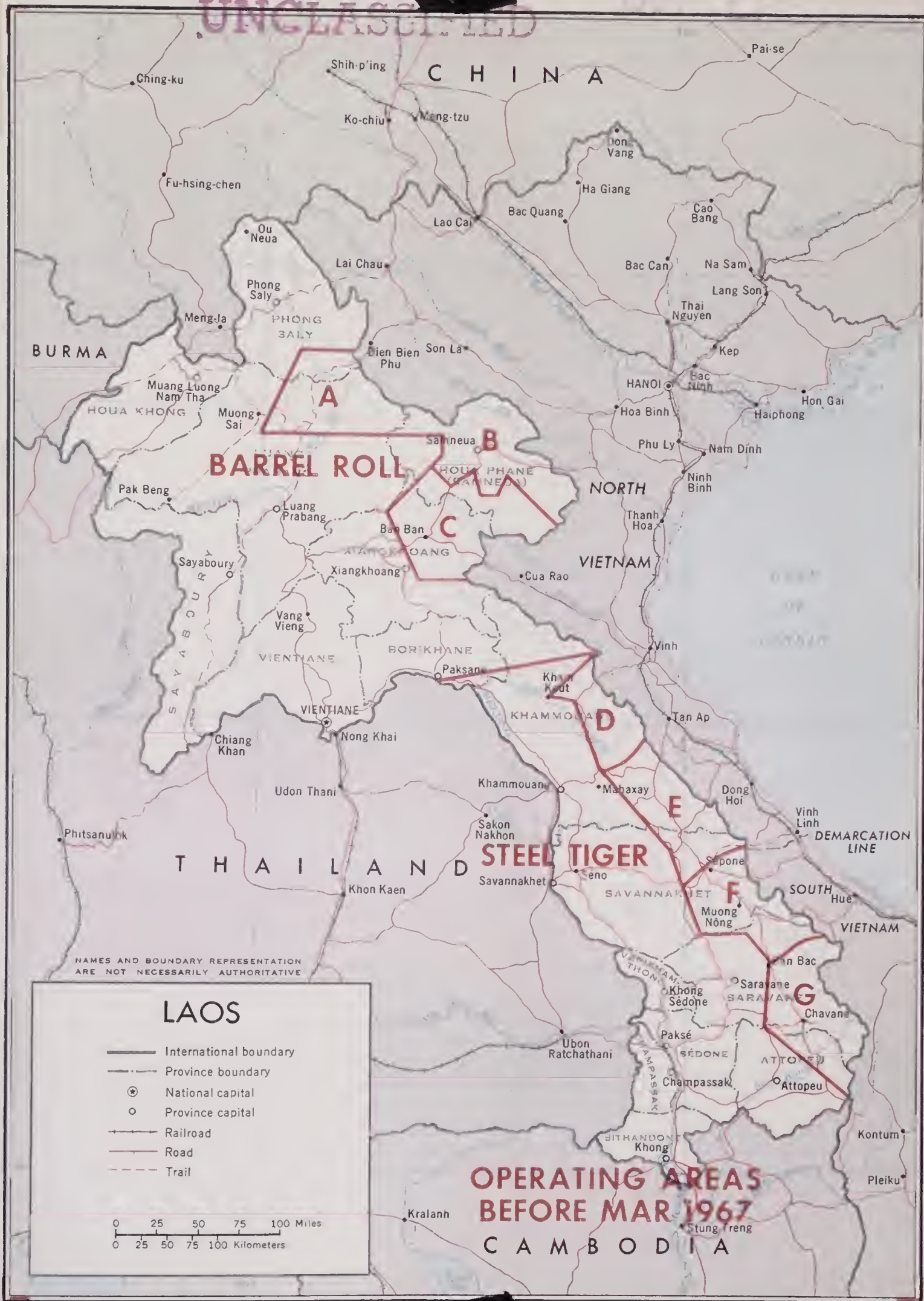
(TS) In the northern war, armed reconnaissance zones along the Lao/NVN border remained unchanged.⁸⁸

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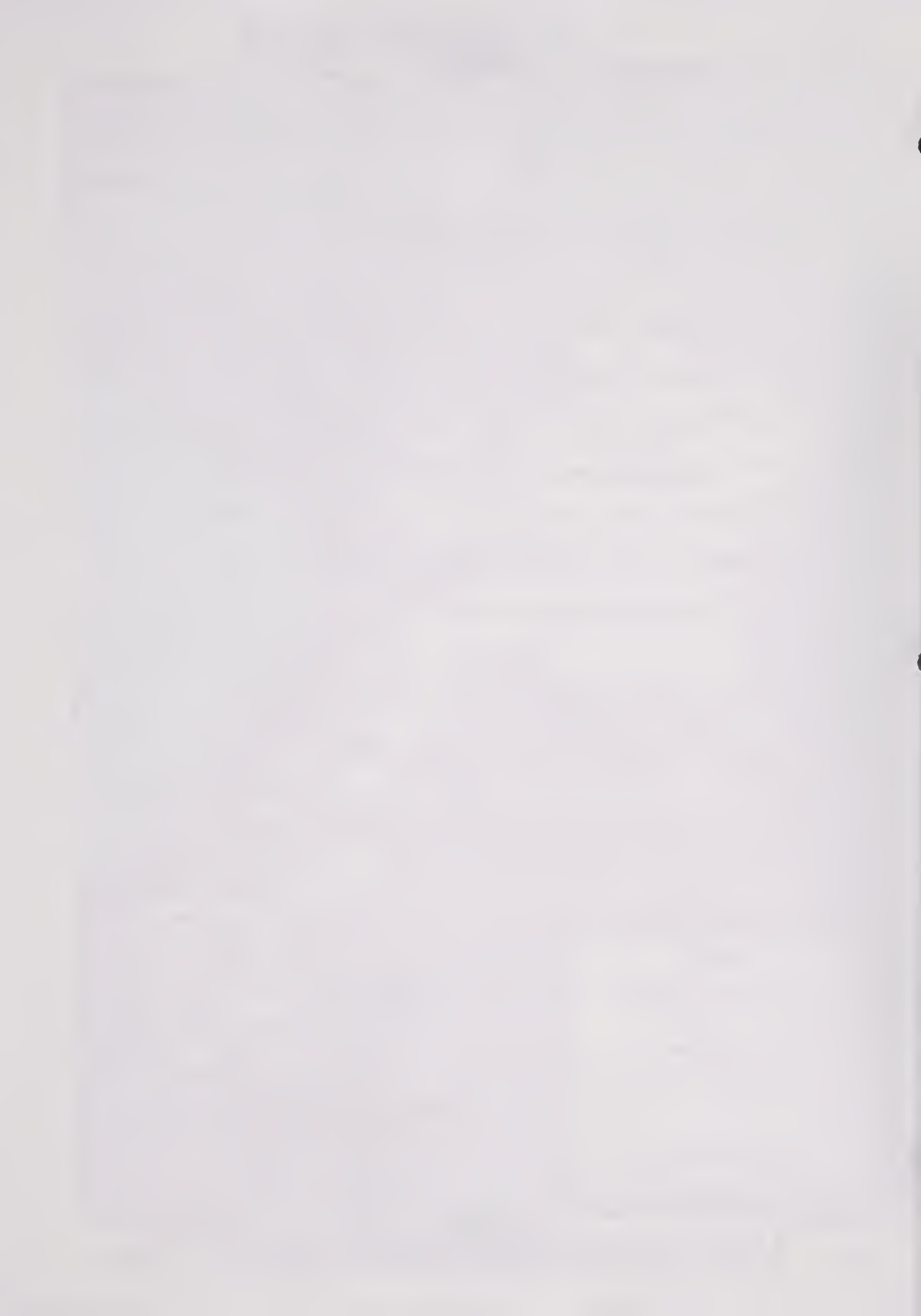


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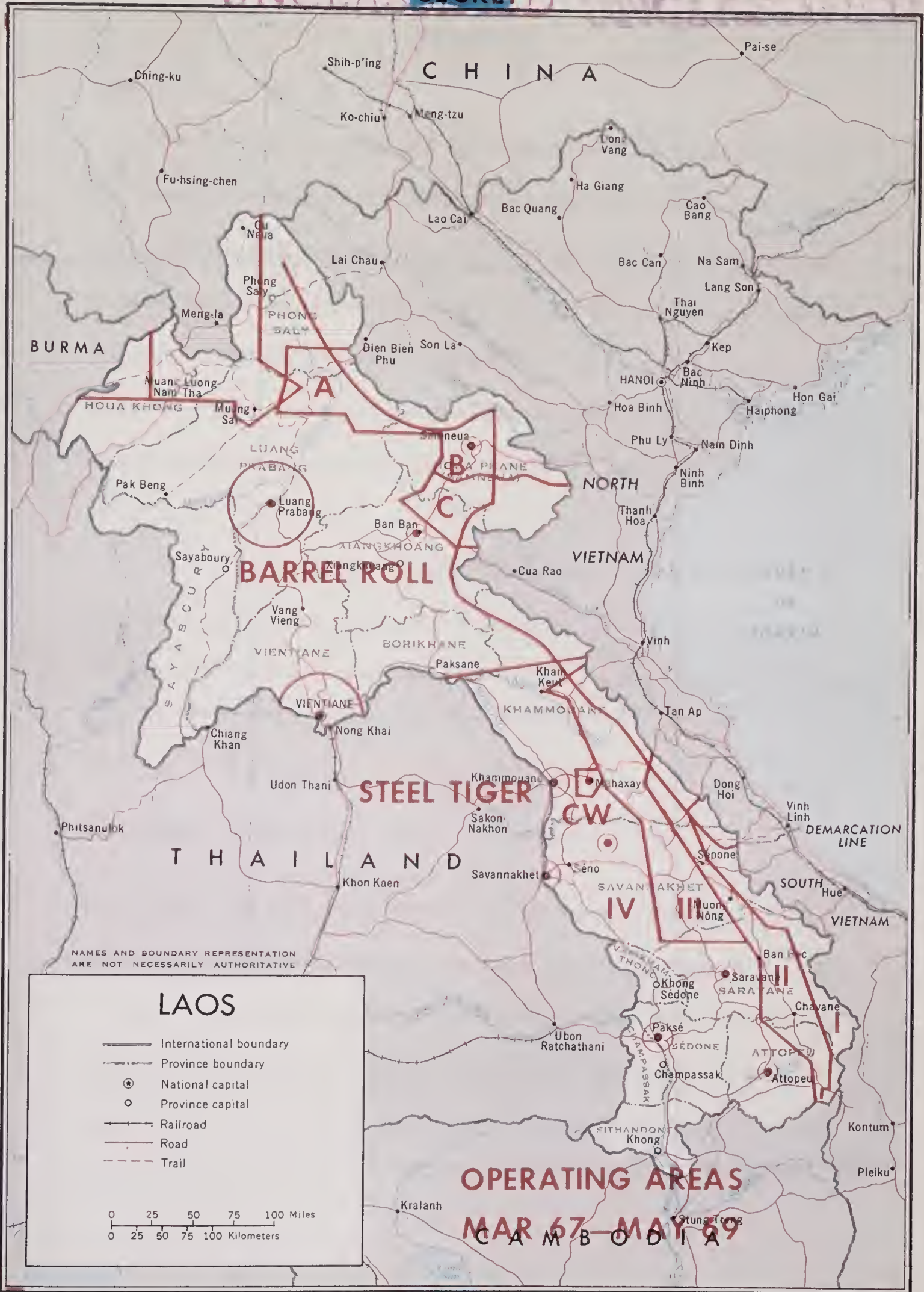
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Map 7

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Interdiction, 1968-69

(TS) In October 1968, the US Ambassador to Laos, through his air attache, issued a consolidated list of restrictions pertaining to the BARREL ROLL area. The list, reflecting Washington-level support of the Ambassador's position as well as administration political/military guidance, portrayed with uncommon clarity the problems presented to those charged with planning for and optimum employment of air power. Indicative of the difficulty were the following:

- No operations within 10 NM of the NVN border, armed reconnaissance only on certain designated routes, limitation on hot pursuit, no air operations adjacent to the Chinese Communist border; and

- US Embassy, Vientiane, control of ordnance, target validation, defoliation and FAC operations.

In addition, 7th Air Force found it necessary to place in effect its own highly detailed control procedures governing strikes in Laos.⁸⁹

(TS) Within this context a major factor inhibiting the truck kill ratio, in the opinion of 7th Air Force, was Embassy, Vientiane, insistence on FAC verification and clearance for strikes against visually acquired targets. The element of surprise, essential when

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dealing with moving targets, was lost due to the overt nature of the FAC mission. As seen by 7th Air Force, "The FAC requirement for identification of trucks is unnecessary because the only ones running around are North Vietnamese."⁹⁰

(TS) Cessation of air attack against NVN on 1 November 1968 brought about action on the part of the administration to establish a "positive control" area along the border inside Laos to protect against inadvertent penetration of NVN airspace.⁹¹

(TS) Early in May 1969 the four STEEL TIGER zones were reduced to two, appropriately termed STEEL TIGER EAST and WEST (Map 8). However, an attempt to modify arrangements relating to the BARREL ROLL area was unsuccessful. The latter remained an armed reconnaissance zone without change in limitations.⁹²

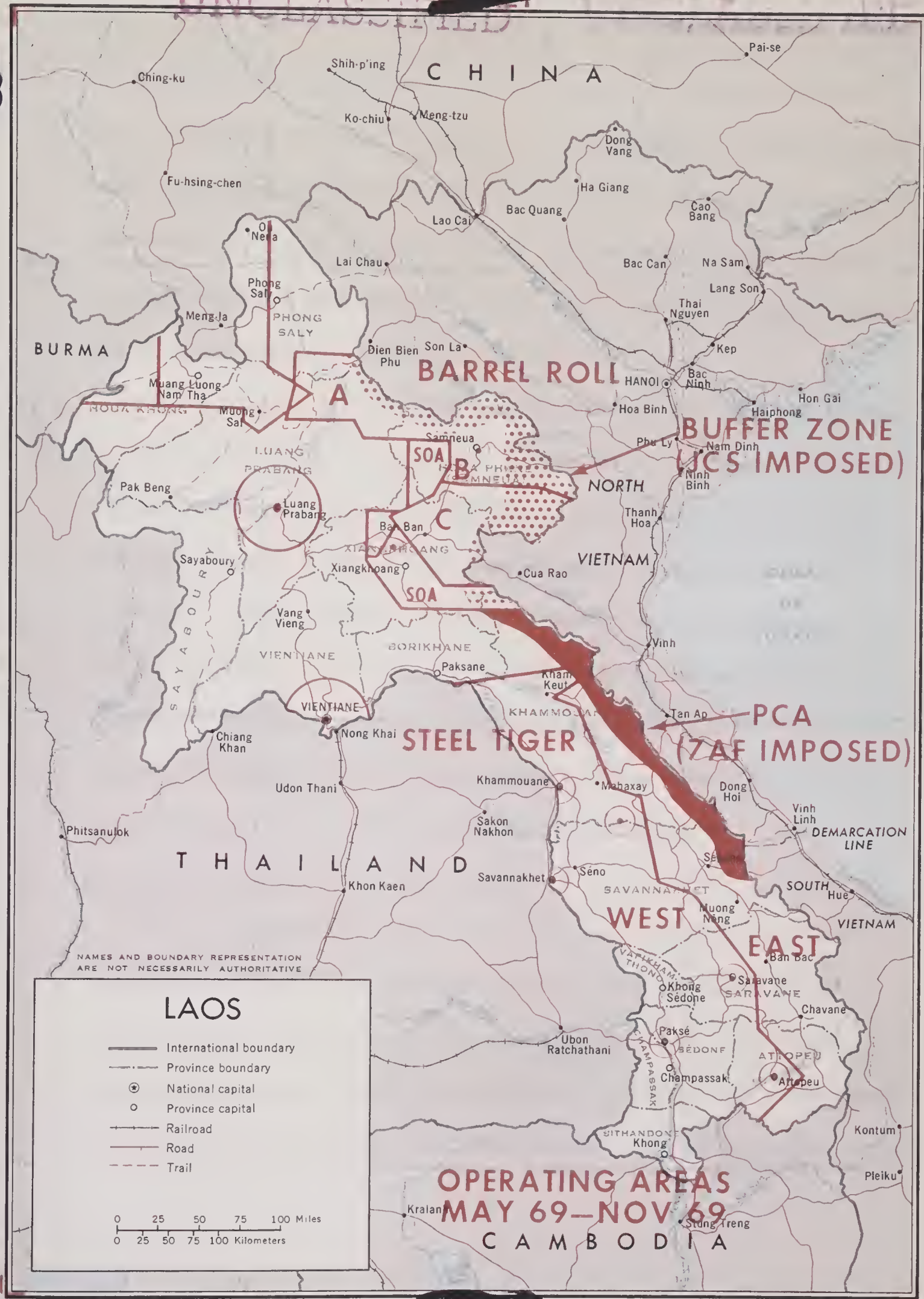
(TS) The presence of Chinese road construction crews in the northern and northwestern regions of Laos led to the creation of yet another restricted area. To avoid international incidents, US aircraft were prohibited from conducting air strikes or low level photo reconnaissance missions in this area without specific approval of the Embassy.⁹³

(S) With North Vietnam intent on pouring supplies down the Ho Chi Minh trail during the dry season, there had been an increased level

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of truck activity in Laos late in 1968, albeit lower than the previous year preceding the 1968 Tet offensive. Enemy truck activity increased sharply in January 1969, was at a record high in March and then declined with onset of the southwest monsoon until sensor readings in June revealed that traffic had fallen to ten percent of the average for the first quarter of 1969.⁹⁴

(S) To counter the fall 1968-spring 1969 logistic surge, Operation COMMANDO HUNT was initiated. COMMANDO HUNT was an interdiction campaign in the STEEL TIGER area of operation which was targetted against the NVN logistical system in the Lao Panhandle. Successive campaigns bore numerical designations that changed with the semiannual monsoonal shift -- odd numbered campaigns corresponding to the dry seasons. All-source intelligence -- including photo, visual, electronic reconnaissance, Igloo White seismic and acoustic sensor input and reports of road watch teams -- were used to develop targets.⁹⁵

(S) In COMMANDO HUNT I, the resupply activity of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) ran at a high level from January through April of 1969. Against it, US forces expended about 400 fighter-attack sorties and 22 B-52 sorties per day. These sorties destroyed or damaged 6,000 trucks, and produced over 50,000 fires and secondary

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explosions. As a result, the NVA was only able to transport about 8,500 of the more than 45,000 tons of supplies from NVN through Laos to RVN, an input-to-throughput ratio of approximately five to one.⁹⁶

(S) The next dry-season interdiction campaign, COMMANDO HUNT III, covered the period November 1969 through April 1970. The North Vietnamese started their resupply effort earlier than in the previous year. Road work and material shipments began before the end of the wet-season and intensified after the rains slackened. Truck activity reached new heights in January and February of 1970, as did the efficacy of the truck-killing force. Fighter-attack aircraft flew almost 300 strike sorties per day, while 23 daily B-52 sorties struck. Damaged or destroyed trucks numbered 10,000; fires and secondary explosions, almost 50,000. The estimated input-to-throughput ratio was about three to one: with 19,000 tons reaching RVN of 55,000 tons moved into Laos. A reduced air effort and an increased NVA logistics effort had resulted in a larger supply flow through Laos during COMMANDO HUNT III than during COMMANDO HUNT I.⁹⁷

(S) Throughput did not meet VC/NVA needs, however, for the resupply effort continued, although reduced, well into the wet season.

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The cumulative effects of the rain and the bombing brought this effort to a virtual halt in August.⁹⁸

(S) As COMMANDO HUNT III was ending, the North Vietnamese resupply operation received a major setback when the Cambodians refused them further use of the port of Sihanoukville. This, combined with the successful allied cross border operations in May and June 1970, which deprived them of thousands of tons of stockpiled supplies along with sanctuaries, greatly increased the enemy's need for supplies from NVN.⁹⁹

(S) During the 1970 wet season, the North Vietnamese departed from past practice in the STEEL TIGER area and did not return their construction battalions to NVN. These units continued to build and improve the road system in Laos. Many NVA antiaircraft positions remained active in Laos to protect the route structure and the limited truck movement. In addition to road construction, the waterway and pipeline portions of the logistic system were also being improved. At the same time in NVN, roads and bridges were being constructed or improved, and many of the trucks were being replaced. In both Laos and NVN, the wet-season activity presaged an intensive resupply effort in the coming dry season.¹⁰⁰

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(S) Whereas the North Vietnamese were projected to mount a larger resupply effort, the US air effort in SEA would be smaller. The authorized level of Navy and Air Force fighter-attack sorties for FY 1971 was 50 percent below the COMMAND HUNT III level, although moderate increases in the capabilities of the VNAF and RLAF would offset this reduction somewhat. In addition, improvements to and doubling of the AC-130 force were expected to enhance the truck-killing program. Moreover, the B-57G force would add to the truck-killing capability.¹⁰¹

(S) During COMMANDO HUNT V, the STEEL TIGER area received the preponderant weight of the US air effort in SEA. The upward trend in overall weight of effort corresponded with increasing enemy activity in STEEL TIGER. It peaked in March when air support requirements for Lam Son 719 and BARREL ROLL were highest. While the month of March was the peak month for NVA truck traffic, 42 percent of the allied tactical air effort during that month was devoted to support of the Lam Son operation; however, much of this support resulted in destruction of enemy supplies and materiel.¹⁰²

(S) In all, 21,000 trucks were reported destroyed or damaged, twice the number reported in COMMANDO HUNT III. Tactical air attacks against truck parks and storage areas accounted for 33,000

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fires and secondary explosions. Of the 60,000 tons of supplies the NVA brought into STEEL TIGER from NVN, only 7,000 tons, or about 11 percent, reached RVN or Cambodia. This input-to-throughput ratio of about nine to one underscores the success achieved by COMMANDO HUNT V interdiction effort.¹⁰³

Review

(TS) The restricted nature of US air operations in Laos kept them largely out of the limelight of US public knowledge. Accordingly, policies governing employment of air power in that country were shaped less by need to achieve prime effectiveness and to create a favorable impression at home than by restrictions stemming from the Geneva Protocols establishing Laotian neutrality in 1962 and the necessity of avoiding damage to the image of Souvanna Phouma among his people. Political sensitivity overrode military requirements in connection with policy formulation, planning and conduct of operations. In the latter regard, the Ambassador to Laos became the central figure insofar as application of air power in Laos is concerned.¹⁰⁴

(TS) Air employment statutes for Laos shifted from relatively simple restrictions to highly complex rules which tended to impede

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operations from 1967 to mid-1969, then back to simpler arrangements by the end of 1969. This undoubtedly was due to many factors; however, two of the major probable causes were a change in US Ambassadors and the rapidly deteriorating position of the RLG. As the communists continued to make steady advances in Laos, the friendly forces became more and more dependent upon US air power. The source of greatest difficulty was need to obtain target validation from the Embassy in Vientiane or its instrumentalities, and the time required to do so.¹⁰⁵

PART III: CAMBODIA

(S) In June 1964 US Ambassador to RVN, Henry Cabot Lodge, advised Washington that "there is no question in our minds here, and there should be none in Washington, that the Viet Cong has been using with impunity Cambodian territory as sanctuary for purposes of grouping, training, and equipping their military units, and for receiving these units from South Vietnam (SVN) when they are tired or hard pressed."¹⁰⁶

(C) The importance of Cambodia to the enemy war effort had been stated in numerous prisoner of war interrogation reports, agent reports and captured documents beginning as early as 1962. The communists had taken pains to maintain good relations with the

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officials of the Cambodian government. Indeed, some of the intelligence reports indicated that various officials in the national government, to include Prince Sihanouk, could be in collusion with the VC, possibly allowing them to use Cambodian territory for refuge and supply.¹⁰⁷

Aerial Reconnaissance

(TS) As the extent of VC use of Cambodia became clearer, and the impact of this use on enemy military activities in RVN came into focus, the US military command in Saigon began to consider means to take the war to the enemy for the purpose of denying use of the sanctuaries.¹⁰⁸

(TS) On 26 October 1963, COMUSMACV recommended that the US Ambassador support a request for photo reconnaissance flights on the Cambodian side of the border. As an outgrowth of this initiative Strategic Air Command (SAC) reconnaissance flights (TROJAN HORSE/GIANT SCALE) were initiated several months later. The objective of these flights was to determine and document the nature and degree of enemy use of Cambodia.¹⁰⁹

(S) In July 1966, comprehensive aerial reconnaissance by 7th Air Force aircraft of the Cambodian border area began under the MACV DORSAL FIN program. The latter provided for all-sensor coverage

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of the Cambodian-RVN border from the area directly west of Tay Ninh City to the Laotian border and into Cambodia to a depth of 20 kilometers. In order to maintain security of the program, crews were under orders to abort the mission in event of hostile fire. There was apprehension that the US would be charged, as in 1964, with responsibility for attacks against Cambodia.¹¹⁰

Interdiction

(TS) US air operations were initiated in Cambodia on 1 May 1970 in support of allied cross-border ground operations. Along with VNAF, 7th Air Force aircraft flew almost 25,000 attack sorties in Cambodia between 1 May and 31 December. Additionally, 1,400 B-52 sorties were flown. Royal Thai Air Force support commenced on 4 July, with 135 attack sorties flown from that date to the end of 1970.¹¹¹

(TS) A 19 May JCS outline plan and directive for an air interdiction campaign in eastern Cambodia restricted implementation until necessary coordination had been effected with the Cambodian armed forces and RVNAF. To accomplish the required coordinations, a meeting was held on 28 May 1970 at MACV headquarters with representation from MACV, Cambodian forces and the RVN Joint General

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Staff. On 29 May, a memorandum of agreement on rules of engagement for Cambodia was signed by the participants and the following day witnessed the first strikes under the plan.¹¹²

(TS) Rules for conduct of interdiction operations provided sufficient latitude for strike aircraft effectiveness. The following constraints were imposed to protect noncombatants and to preserve areas of cultural value to the Cambodian people:

- All strikes by tactical fighters were conducted under the control of a FAC except for properly validated and cleared radar-controlled attacks. Helicopter gunships were considered FAC capable aircraft. F-4 and A-6 aircraft utilizing internal radar bombing systems could conduct nonvisual attacks against validated targets;

- Radar-controlled B-52 strikes were to be conducted periodically against validated area targets;

- Aircraft were cleared to return ground fire directed at them, except when such fire was from an urban area, town, village or hamlet. When ground fire was received from such an area, Forces Armee' Nationale Khmer (FANK) validation was to be secured prior to return of fire, and fire was limited to that part of the area from which the ground fire was observed;

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- Air strikes, other than to return ground fire, were not to be conducted against an urban area, town, village or hamlet unless:

- . The target was known to contain enemy forces or storage areas,
- . The target was validated by FANK,
- . FANK advised the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) at Tan Son Nhut in RVN of the absence of noncombatants. If noncombatants were present, the strike would not be conducted until inhabitants had been warned to leave the area;

- Nonlethal incapacitating agents, in addition to normal munitions, could be used by search and rescue forces when required to insure the recovery of a downed aircrew; and

- Specifically designated areas of cultural value to the Cambodian people would not be struck unless requested and validated by FANK.¹¹³

(TS) FANK established Special Operating Areas (SOA) which were geographically defined areas where there were no friendly forces or populace. Allied aircraft could strike any target discovered there. FANK reaffirmed these areas every 10 days and could revoke them upon prior notification.¹¹⁴

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(TS) FANK also divided existing LOC into two categories, which they reaffirmed every 10 days and could revoke upon prior notification:

- Category A LOC were those along which no friendly forces or personnel were located. Strikes were authorized on and 1000 meters to either side of these LOC;

- Category B LOC were those along which friendly personnel were located. Aircraft, including gunships, were permitted to strike motor vehicles or moving watercraft at night and motor boats or motor vehicles during daylight hours. These strikes were limited to a zone 500 meters either side of the LOC.¹¹⁵

(TS) When potential targets were discovered by aircraft or reported by intelligence agencies outside the SOA or the designated LOC, FANK validation was required before they could be attacked. Procedures were developed to establish rapid validation of targets. FANK was responsible for providing:

- English-speaking liaison officers with authority to validate targets to the TACC;

- English-speaking officers with authority to validate targets while flying with certified FAC's from Pleiku, RVN;

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- Current information to their officers on the disposition of friendly forces and location of noncombatants in the interdiction areas.¹¹⁶

The provisions of FANK officers with fluent English language capabilities was a problem that hampered effective air operations from time to time.¹¹⁷ Attempts to provide USAF pilots capable of speaking French produced only limited results.

(S) On 6 June 1970, CINCPAC promulgated the basic operations order for air interdiction operations in eastern Cambodia. The mission as stated therein called for surveillance of enemy activities in Cambodia, east of the Mekong River, and interdiction with tactical air and B-52's of those enemy activities considered necessary to protect US forces in the RVN. The area of operations was designated FREEDOM DEAL.¹¹⁸

(U) In his televised report on the Cambodian operation on 30 June 1970, President Nixon stated that the US would conduct:

. . . with the approval of the Cambodian Government - air interdiction missions against the enemy efforts to move supplies and personnel through Cambodia toward South Vietnam and to re-establish base areas relevant to the war in Vietnam. We do this to protect our forces in South Vietnam.¹¹⁹

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(TS) Thus, after 30 June 1970, air operations in Cambodia took on the aspect of interdiction designed to halt the flow of men and arms before their arrival in RVN and thereby reduce the risk to US forces.

(U) In late June 1970, Secretary of Defense Laird asserted
". . . We will carry on an air interdiction campaign and any airpower that is used in Cambodia will be based upon the interdiction of supplies, or personnel, that threaten the Vietnamization program, that threaten Americans, that are engaged in military operations in Vietnam."

(Emphasis added.) The Secretary further stated ". . . I would be less than frank or candid with you if there would not be a side effect as far as Cambodian and South Vietnamese troops operating in Cambodia, . . . but the primary reason for the air activities will be the protection of Americans in South Vietnam."¹²⁰

(U) That Cambodian ground forces were receiving ancillary benefits from US air operations did not escape the American press corps. In August 1970, in response to a query on "explicit reporting" of US close air support to Cambodian forces, Secretary Laird reaffirmed:

. . . I can tell you that we will continue to interdict supplies, personnel and logistic routes. There will be certainly ancillary benefits, too, that will affect Cambodian operations; however, our primary mission, as far as the use of our air--whether it be in the southern part of Cambodia or along the sanctuary areas, or along the river routes--will be interdiction of supplies and personnel.¹²¹

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(TS) On 17 July 1970, JCS provided authority to COMUSMACV to employ US tactical air power in any situation such as the imminent loss of a province capitol or a military position, which would prove to be a major military setback or a serious blow to Cambodian morale. Further, he was directed to conduct the most aggressive air campaign possible using both US and VNAF resources.¹²²

(TS) Based on a 30 July 1970 request of COMUSMACV, operations in an extended FREEDOM DEAL area were authorized on 1 August 1970. On 26 August the area was further extended under the designation, FREEDOM DEAL ALPHA (Map 9).¹²³ Then on 30 April 1971, CINCPAC directed all the FREEDOM DEAL areas to be consolidated into one operational area. This same message authorized US air support of ARVN ground forces operating in Cambodia.¹²⁴

Case
Cooper-Church Amendment

(U) The *Case* ~~Cooper~~-Church Amendment to the Foreign Military Sales Act, and Special Foreign Assistance Act of 1971 (Public Law 91 - 652) established a prohibition on the conduct of any combat air activity in the air above Cambodia in direct support of the Cambodian forces effective 1 January 1971. However, the Amendment reaffirmed the constitutional power of the President as Commander in Chief to

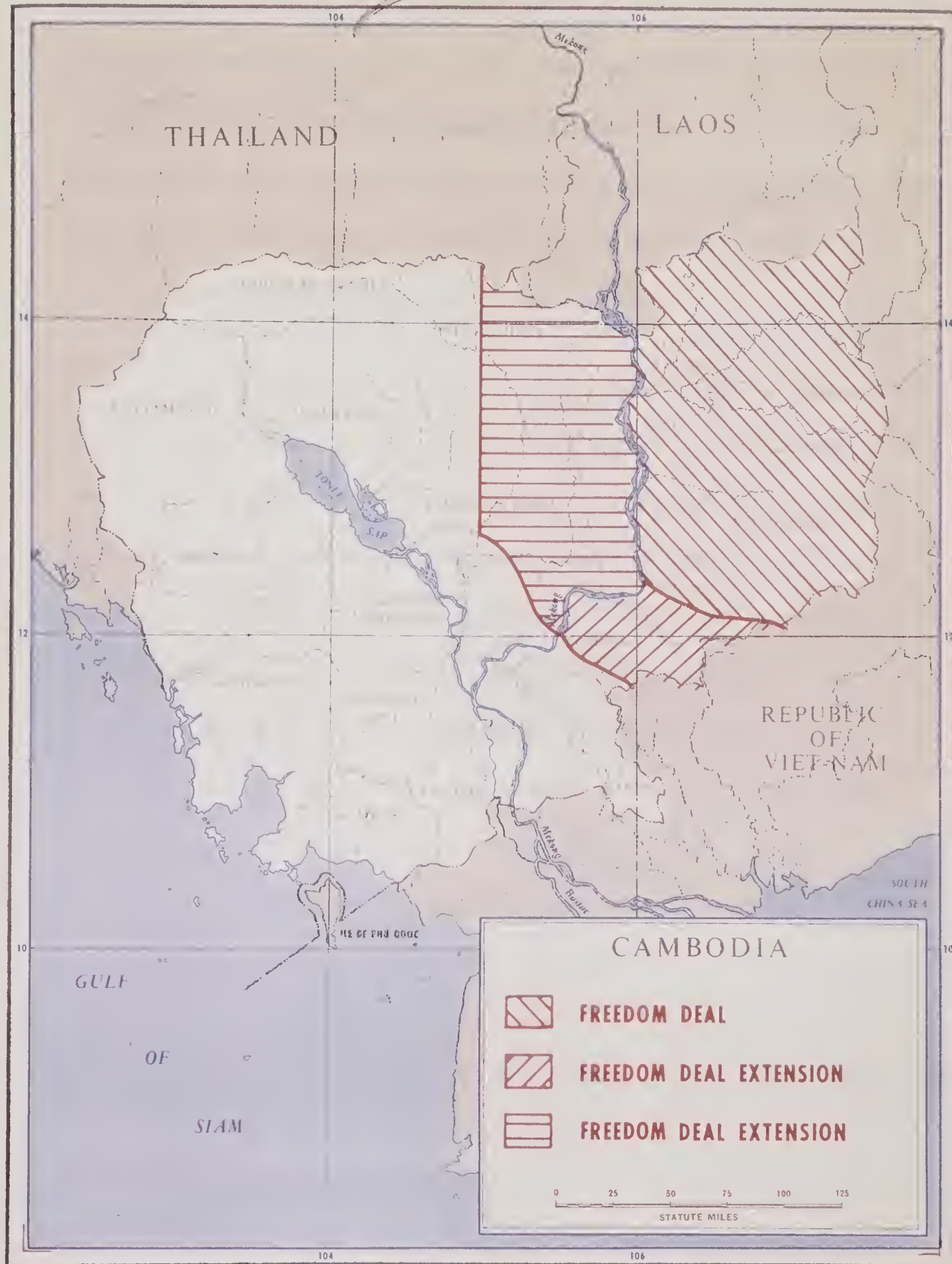
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exercise whatever power might be necessary to protect the lives of US armed forces personnel wherever deployed.¹²⁵

(TS) Thus, despite the restrictions placed on US air operations in Cambodia by the Cooper-Church Amendment, US air power has provided various types of support to the Cambodian forces within the framework of interdiction operations.¹²⁶

PART IV: REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

(C) Of all areas in SEA, fewer restrictions were imposed on air operations in RVN, after the US build up, than any other. This appears to have been an outgrowth of realization that tactical commanders required air support -- that the soldier and marine on the ground needed all the assistance that could be provided.

(C) In early 1965, lack of suitable combat aircraft, coupled with a relatively loose air request and control system, initially led to complaints on the ground force side that:

- A cohesive air support program did not exist;
- Air elements were not responsive;
- Reaction was too slow;
- The type support required often was not forthcoming; and
- The air request was cumbersome.¹²⁷

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(C) In spite of these complaints, air support evolved into an acceptable although not fully effective program. With build up of US forces in Vietnam, beginning in the spring of 1965, the requirement for increased use and improved control of air resources came to the fore. In September 1964, and again in July 1965, COMUSMACV published directives centralizing control and effecting a refinement of the allocation and request system for air support.¹²⁸ The major improvement accomplished by these directives was retention of the joint air operations center at MACV, and establishment at Second Air Division (subsequently redesignated 7th Air Force), with VNAF participation, a tactical air control center and related system for command and control of USAF/VNAF air assets and for the coordination of US Navy and Marine Corps air strikes. With but few later modifications, among them an arrangement adopted in 1968 wherein Commander, 7th Air Force became COMUSMACV's "single manager" for USAF and US Marine Corps tactical air in RVN, this arrangement has met planning, allocation and control requirements to date.¹²⁹

(TS) While CINCPAC would pass control to COMUSMACV of some of the air operations in the southern panhandle of North Vietnam, it was General Westmoreland's contention that these areas were in fact part of the same battle which was being fought in the south.

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General Westmoreland believed that the Lao logistics corridor to include the Route 1 area of the North Vietnam panhandle, and the sanctuary areas of Cambodia comprised the communications zone for the enemy forces and therefore should be in the extended battle-field with all operations against these areas under the command of the tactical (COMUSMACV) commander.¹³⁰ His concept was not to bear fruition, however.

Refinements

(TS) From 1966 on, the policies governing the employment of air assets in RVN remained relatively constant. A problem at times was the requirement for approval by the RVN province chief or a higher authority for strikes by US aircraft other than those engaged in close air support of ground operations.¹³¹ In time, however, the approval process was simplified and standardized in furtherance of fully responsive use of air power.

(TS) One development worthy of note was addition of measures designed to reduce still further the possibility of air delivered ordnance falling on friendly forces. To begin with, the requirement for FAC control was extended to all tactical air strikes. Friendly forces on the ground were made responsible for marking their positions for

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each flight of strike aircraft and for remarking them as often as was necessary. The FAC was made responsible for marking the target and the ground commander for confirming the accuracy of the target-mark. If, in the opinion of the ground commander, the FAC or the strike pilot, the target was inaccurately or poorly marked, the FAC was to remark it before the strike aircraft could be cleared to expend ordnance. If the friendly position could not be marked due to lack of marking means or for tactical reasons, the FAC was to ask the ground commander to accept responsibility in the event of a short round.¹³²

(TS) While not preventing such incidents altogether, the new procedures helped to reduce them while still providing flexibility to insure continued support. This was in marked contrast to the 1962 era, when inadequacy of FAC resources and lack of proper marking frequently prohibited delivery of ordnance no matter how great the need of the tactical commander.¹³³

(TS) Commencing in FY 1970, reduction of US strategic and tactical air sorties was made a feature of the Department of Defense portion of the Federal Budget. Early in calendar year 1970, COMUS MACV stated that budget reductions had imposed a cut of over twenty percent in B-52 and tactical air sorties; this in turn had reduced

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allied capability to respond to multiple contingencies with the massed firepower that had become increasingly important to success of the Vietnamization process. He further stated that the proposed FY 1971 budget would in effect dismantle the highly visible means of executing the US declaration that strong measures would be taken against NVN if increased enemy action jeopardized remaining US forces in RVN.¹³⁴

PART V: B-52 (ARC LIGHT) EMPLOYMENT

(S) As a sequel to the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, additional B-52's were deployed to Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, in February 1965 to provide military planners with additional options. B-52 employment was to be given the code designation, ARC LIGHT.¹³⁵

(TS) Because allied tactical air assets available in RVN and aboard Seventh Fleet carriers were not sufficient to meet the increasing demands for aerial firepower, on 15 June 1965 COMUSMACV requested B-52 strikes against a VC base area in Binh Duong Province. The JCS approved the request on the following day.¹³⁶ When bomb damage assessment carried out following the strike revealed no evidence of VC casualties, strong criticism was voiced by the American press that B-52's were an expensive and ineffective weapon for use against guerrilla forces.¹³⁷

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(TS) Under the ARC LIGHT program COMUSMACV was required to forward strike requests for coordination with the White House and Department of State prior to an execution decision by the Secretary of Defense. Each request specified that:

- The area within one kilometer of the target was free of noncombatants, noncombatant dwellings, pagodas, shrines, temples and other places of worship; and that

- Concurrence in striking the target had been received from the US Embassy and the GVN.¹³⁸

(TS) A further example of the degree of control exercised over B-52 strikes is found in a 20 October 1965 message from the JCS to COMUSMACV which disapproved certain targets by virtue of their proximity to noncombatants or friendly elements. This had proved to be a matter of concern to agencies responsible for target review and granting of execution authority. The JCS reminded COMUSMACV that targets situated within one nautical mile of noncombatants were subject to close scrutiny at the national level.¹³⁹

(TS) In reply to this message COMUSMACV, on 31 October 1965, stated: "The protection of noncombatants is a primary concern to us on the scene." In addition, he stated that control procedures in

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effect within RVN were designed to minimize risk to inhabited areas.

He added that cancellation of targets meeting the control criteria, to include approval by GVN authorities, could jeopardize the success of operations as well as disrupt continued progress in exploiting the value of B-52 strikes.¹⁴⁰

(S) Approval authority for ARC LIGHT strikes within RVN was delegated to CINCPAC in April 1966. Under this decentralized approach:

- COMUSMACV was tasked with sending target requests and justification therefor to CINCPAC, simultaneously notifying Washington agencies that previously had been involved in execution approval; and

- CINCPAC, upon approving requests, was to inform Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC), who then would execute the strike. Concurrently, CINCPAC was to notify COMUSMACV of the action taken.¹⁴¹

(S) In November 1966, ARC LIGHT approval authority was further decentralized to COMUSMACV. Rationale for this action resided primarily in the fact that targets were usually in enemy-controlled areas and were not "politically sensitive." CINCPAC was to be notified of each planned strike and could apply a veto if desired.

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G VN and US Embassy concurrence remained a requirement; CINCSAC exercised execution control.

(S) Under this streamlined arrangement faster reaction time was achieved. Moreover, the ARC LIGHT effort could be blended more and more into the maneuver of ground forces as opposed to employment only against pre-planned fixed targets. The added firepower was necessary to cope with the enemy's ever-increasing commitment of troops and materiel.¹⁴²

(TS) Despite COMUSMACV's expressed concern, sortie rates for tactical air fell from about 21,000 per month to 14,000 per month, and B-52 sortie rates fell from 1,600 to 1,400 per month at the beginning of FY 1971.¹⁴³

(TS) Budget-related reductions in authorized sortie rates continued throughout the period with sortie levels reduced at the beginning of FY 1972 to 11,000 tactical air and 1,000 B-52 sorties per month, with still further reductions planned.¹⁴⁴ CINCPAC, meanwhile, stressed that progressive reduction of sorties in SEA had resulted in easing pressure against the enemy and had increased the level of risk to allied forces in RVN when coupled with US ground force reductions.¹⁴⁵

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PART V: CONCLUSIONS

(U) Both strategic and tactical air -- the latter in its reconnaissance, airlift and strike roles -- have contributed in major degree to fulfillment of allied objectives in SEA. Employment of air power in SEA has been most effective in RVN by virtue of fewer restrictions imposed on air operations in that country.

(TS) Political constraints, notably in the realm of targetting policy, have prevented fully effective and sustained application of air power against the enemy in NVN and Laos. In company with the US administration's doctrine of graduated pressure and its self-imposed restrictions against neutralization of Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries, the constraints take their place among actions exemplifying conduct of the war with "one hand tied behind the back."

(U) Restrictions notwithstanding, allied operations in SEA have manifested the flexibility and adaptability of air power.

(U) Strategic air as employed in SEA has provided a means of bringing massive fire power to bear against enemy base areas and troop concentrations inaccessible to friendly ground forces. As such, it has been an invaluable asset for use by COMUSMACV in influencing the situation.

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(TS) Beginning in FY 1970, budgetary decisions have been responsible for progressive decline in availability and effect of US air power in SEA. These decisions have had only marginal relevance to the enemy threat and to military requirements presented by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC.

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CHAPTER VI

PRIOR PROPOSALS FOR AND THE LIMITED INCURSION INTO CAMBODIA (U)

PURPOSE

(U) The use of Cambodia as a sanctuary and source of supply by North Vietnam (NVN) and Viet Cong (VC) forces has had a profound effect on the war in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). This chapter will analyze the impact on military operations in RVN of United States (US) policy on enemy use of Cambodia during the period January 1963 to and during the US-RVN incursion into Cambodia commencing 1 May 1970.

APPROACH

(U) The major topics identified below will be examined:

- VC/North Vietnamese Army (NVA) use of Cambodia as a sanctuary and source of supply;
- US political objectives and policy guidance with respect to Cambodia;
- US political restraints placed upon friendly operations into Cambodia;
- Proposals by Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), for authority to use limited air,

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ground, and naval forces in Cambodia to gain intelligence of enemy activities therein and to destroy enemy base areas;

- Effects of enemy use of Cambodia on friendly military operations in RVN;

- The intelligence dispute between the field and Washington intelligence agencies on extent of enemy use of Cambodia; and

- Nature and effect of US public pressure resulting from the US-RVN incursion into the Cambodian sanctuaries.

(U) Examination will be undertaken within the framework of the following outline:

- Period prior to major US buildup, 1963-65.
- US buildup, 1965-67.
- Tet offensive to incursion, 1968-70.
- Intelligence dispute.
- Political crisis in Cambodia, 1969-70.
- US-RVN incursion, 1970.
- Assessment
- Conclusions.

(U) A chronology of significant events is attached at Appendix.

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PERIOD PRIOR TO MAJOR US BUILDUP, 1963-65

(S) In 1963, VC use of Cambodia for sanctuary and as a source of supply became increasingly apparent. Although the degree of complicity on the part of Cambodian officials at the time is unclear, there are indicators that some cooperation was forthcoming from Phnom Penh. In any case, at a meeting reportedly held in the Communist Chinese Embassy, Phnom Penh, in January 1963, representative of the VC, NVN, Communist China and the Soviet Union agreed on a plan to outfit 12 battalions of troops to protect VC war zones, particularly Zone "D" northeast of Saigon. The concept called for the units to rotate from RVN into Cambodia. Control would be exercised by a headquarters in Cambodia. At a minimum, the conferees considered that as long as the units taking sanctuary in Cambodia gave no offense to authorities in Phnom Penh, their activity risked little probability of being curtailed by the Cambodians.¹ Terrain and population distribution along the RVN - Cambodian border undoubtedly reinforced this point of view.

(U) Approximately 675 miles in length, the border passes through varying terrain, vegetation and population density. From the tri-border area where Laos, Cambodia and RVN come together south to Snuol, the terrain generally is rolling and covered with light to heavy jungle, although there are some extensive grass lands (Map 1). The region is thinly

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populated by Montagnard tribes, various of which have little contact with the Cambodian Government. The area from the vicinity of Snuol extending southwest for roughly 50 miles features moderate to heavy jungle. In this same area, however, extensive rubber plantation and some rice cultivation are to be found.

(U) Population density is shown on Map 2. From Mimot southwest to the Bassac River, density increases. The bulk of the populace inhabits small villages and cultivates rice. Although the population is principally Khmer, ethnic Vietnamese settlements are interspersed throughout this area, primarily in the vicinity of Svay Rieng. From the Bassac River to the Gulf of Siam, density begins to thin and rice farming predominates.

(U) Two significant salients project into South Vietnamese territory: the "Parrot's Beak" and the "Fish Hook." The "Parrot's Beak" is heavily populated; the "Fish Hook" sparsely so.

(S) Early evidence that the VC were being assisted logistically from sources in Cambodia was provided by interception of large quantities of explosives on the Mekong and Bassac Rivers near the Cambodian border during the period April through June 1963.² Prior to this time an apparent shift toward the possibility of Cambodian governmental sympathy for or accommodation with the communists

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was indicated by the visit of Prince Sihanouk to Peking in February 1963, followed by the signing of a friendship treaty between Peking and Phnom Penh during the visit to Cambodia of Chinese Communist President Liu Shao-chi in May.³ Following a series of accusations by both the South Vietnamese and Cambodians concerning border violations, diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed on 27 August 1963.⁴ In October, during another visit to Peking, Sihanouk signed a joint communique which condemned US "actions" in Indochina and China, and reiterated support for an international conference on Cambodia.⁵ On 14 October and again on 29 November, Chinese Communist ships were observed unloading arms and trucks at Sihanoukville. The unloading took place at night under strict security conditions.⁶

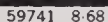
(TS) As early as January 1963, COMUSMACV had reported to Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) his belief that Cambodia was being used extensively by the VC as a sanctuary and source of supply, and that border controls initiated by the South Vietnamese were ineffective in stopping this use.⁷ In April 1963, CINCPAC in turn informed the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) of VC use of Cambodia; however, he urged that the problem be handled through diplomatic channels.⁸

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(TS) On 20 February 1964, COMUSMACV requested some relaxation by the JCS on restrictions placed on US forces and on Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) in regard to the Cambodia border. These restrictions are summarized as follows:

- Overt Operations: Air, ground and naval units were forbidden to move beyond or fire across international boundaries; hot pursuit was not authorized; operations were prohibited within one kilometer of the border except in support of units under attack, unless the border was well defined by a river or road.

- Covert Operations: There was to be no penetration of Cambodian airspace, and no US personnel were to accompany RVNAF elements into Cambodia.⁹

(TS) COMUSMACV requested relaxation of the restrictions in the following priority:

Overt Operations

- Encourage the Government of Vietnam (GVN) to adopt the principle of "hot pursuit" when VC forces entered Cambodia after committing hostile acts in the RVN;

- Authorize US advisors to accompany RVNAF units engaged in hot pursuit; and

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- Authorize overflight of Cambodia for reconnaissance and photography.

Covert Operations

- Authorize RVNAF to conduct covert ground operations into Cambodia;

- Authorize air operations in support of such operations to include airlift, resupply and cover; and

- Authorize US personnel to accompany the RVNAF ground and air elements.

(TS) The request came to naught. Rather, the restrictions continued in force well into 1967, except for high altitude flights by U-2 aircraft authorized in February 1964.¹⁰

(S) In an effort to operate within the restrictions while maintaining effective surveillance of the borders, US Army Special Forces were tasked to organize and train Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) forces and to establish a number of camps along the border. By the end of 1964, of 44 CIDG camps established, 29 were assigned border control and surveillance missions. Twenty-three of these camps were in the vicinity of the Cambodian border,¹¹ the remainder near the Laotian border.

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(TS) In January 1965¹² and again in May 1965¹³ COMUSMACV

raised the issue concerning border restrictions and again recommended that authority be granted for hot pursuit by Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) units. On 12 May, the JCS stated that "The Department of State has been consulted with respect to those recommendations and is opposed to any relaxation in constraints at this time in view of the political situation with Cambodia"¹⁴ (even though Cambodia had severed diplomatic relations with the US on 3 May).¹⁵

US BUILDUP, 1965-67

(TS) As more US forces moved into RVN, it was inevitable that their operations would take them near the Cambodian border. In November 1965, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) engaged sizable VC/NVA units in the Ia Drang River Valley west of Pleiku. During the course of the operations, the enemy forces eventually withdrew into base areas in Cambodia.¹⁶ Accordingly, in December 1965, COMUSMACV requested the following standby authorities with respect to operations near the Cambodian border in Pleiku, Kontum and Darlac Provinces:

- Use of artillery and air strikes to a depth of 10 kilometers on enemy weapons firing from Cambodia; and

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- Maneuver of ground troops up to two kilometers into Cambodia if such maneuver was necessary for preservation of the force or attainment of an objective within RVN.¹⁷

Later in the month, this request was approved except for that portion pertaining to attainment of an objective within RVN. However, Washington required advance notification when friendly forces were to be maneuvering adjacent to the border. In emergency situations, this notification could be waived.¹⁸ Although this authority was granted for a three-province area, it was not until June 1968 that it was extended to include the entire Cambodian border.¹⁹

(S) In March 1966, the Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division requested through I Field Force, Vietnam (FFORCEV) that the Cambodian-RVN border be redefined west of its then current definition. The principal rationale offered was that by observing a border further west friendly forces could gain the advantage of surprise as well as improve their chances of cutting off the enemy's possible escape routes. Further reasoning pointed out that the request, if granted, would aid the US in proving that NVA troops were being employed in RVN. COMUSMACV approved and forwarded the request on 31 March 1966.²⁰ In a 1 April reply thereto, the Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff (CJCS) stated he was in full agreement with the military

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justification for the request, but that after serious deliberation he felt compelled to deny it. He further stipulated that authority already granted to COMUSMACV concerning the Cambodian border would permit tactical commanders to deal with enemy utilizing Cambodian territory. He counseled that this authority could be used if and when the need arose.²¹

(S) On 27 June 1966, the JCS authorized COMUSMACV to develop a cross-border ground reconnaissance capability utilizing indigenous assets led by US Special Forces. The undertaking was to be identified by the code name DANIEL BOONE.²² Permission to use the cross-border reconnaissance teams developed under the new authority was not granted, however, until May 1967, and then only for the tri-border area²³ (Map 3).

(S) In a message from the CJCS to CINCPAC concerning initiation of aerial reconnaissance over Cambodia, the former stated that the JCS had been trying for several weeks to obtain State Department concurrence, but as of early June 1966 had been unsuccessful in the attempt. The problem as seen by the CJCS revolved around State Department dialogue via the Australians with Prince Sihanouk on use of the International Control Commission within Cambodia, and the fear that aerial reconnaissance would jeopardize its success. The

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CJCS felt that a State go-ahead might be obtained through a strong message from COMUSMACV to CINCPAC outlining again VC/NVA exploitation of Cambodian sanctuary and reiterating need for timely and accurate intelligence of enemy activity. Such a message, endorsed by CINCPAC, might, he felt, get at least a one-time authorization for an aerial reconnaissance mission.²⁴ Though the Chairman's lead was followed, the requirement for cross-border reconnaissance remained unsatisfied as 1966 closed.

(S) On 19 September 1966 at an Embassy meeting in Saigon, General Westmoreland had stated that US forces were deployed to Vietnam with two general missions: the first, area security; the second, to take the fight to the VC/NVA in their base areas in RVN. However, he went on to point out that a third major mission had emerged -- the US must program troops to contain large enemy forces situated across the RVN border in the areas of sanctuary.²⁵

(TS) In November 1966, after assessing battle actions in Tay Ninh Province involving VC utilization of Cambodia as a sanctuary, COMUSMACV recommended the following:

- Low-level reconnaissance flights in the immediate border area;

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- Limited covert operations into Cambodia; and
- Limited bombing attacks in the border area.

This authority was denied.²⁶

(TS) Since Ambassador Lodge frequently associated himself with requests by COMUSMACV for widened authority in coping with the Cambodian problem, Secretary of State Rusk, in a November 1966 message to the Ambassador, amplified the reasons for denying them:

Our desire to avoid an expansion of the war in the Republic of Vietnam remains a basic consideration regarding our policy for South-east Asia. Actions which threaten to bring such an expansion into Cambodia would raise misunderstanding as to our intentions and weaken the base of national and international support of our effort in Southeast Asia. Although recognizing the problems created by the VC/NVA use of Cambodia and the need to protect our forces in the Republic of Vietnam, we must avoid action which would create greater problems and dangers. We continue to believe that the best means of achieving our objectives regarding Cambodia is through political and diplomatic means, although at this time there seems to be little hope for an improvement in Cambodian attitudes through diplomatic measures. Furthermore, although a genuine concern over mounting use of Cambodia by the VC/NVA exists, we believe the situation will continue to require considerable forbearance on our part as well as cool and objective balancing of costs and benefits in terms of our overall interests in considering ways to deal with this problem.²⁷

(TS) During the same month, November 1966, a Southeast Asia Coordinating Committee (SEACoord) meeting brought together

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Ambassadors Sullivan (Laos), Martin (Thailand) and Bunker (RVN), to which General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp were invited.

As an outgrowth of this session a sequential, non-belligerent approach toward Cambodia which supported Secretary Rusk's message was recommended to Washington in the hope that the diplomatic approach would move Sihanouk closer toward neutralism.²⁸

(U) Although the diplomatic approach was underway, events in RVN were influencing the VC/NVA to place increasing reliance on Cambodia. By the fall of 1966, operation MARKET TIME, designed to seal the RVN coast against infiltration of enemy troops and supplies, had become highly effective. For the period prior to 1966, MACV estimated the enemy in RVN had received about 70 percent of his supplies by coastal infiltration. As of the end of 1966, best estimates indicated that less than 10 percent were received in this way.²⁹ To support his forces logistically, the enemy now had either to resupply through Laos or through Cambodia. He chose Cambodia to meet his requirements in the southern half of the Republic.

(TS) Continuing use of Cambodia by VC/NVA forces posed an increasing threat to US and RVN forces as the war moved into 1967.

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The demonstrated ability of the VC/NVA to mass large forces in Cambodia, and then with little or no warning to strike out against targets within RVN was becoming more and more difficult to cope with. Again, political and administrative requirements compounded the problem and delayed realization of appropriate countermeasures.

(TS) DANIEL BOONE operations inaugurated in the tri-border area commencing in May 1967³⁰ were expanded in October 1967 to two zones, Alpha and Bravo, which extended to a depth of 20 kilometers from the border (Map 4). Missions into Zone Bravo, however, required approval in Washington on a case by case basis.³¹ In July 1967, selective tactical air reconnaissance overflights into Cambodia were authorized under a program designated DORSAL FIN,³² and in December of that year forward air control aircraft were provided limited authorization to overfly Cambodia.³³ In each instance, however, COMUSMACV's requests for the requisite authority met with calls not only for detailed documentation of VC/NVA use of specific areas in Cambodia, but for equally detailed forecasts of intelligence to be derived from the undertakings. Response necessarily entailed extensive effort which served to impose further delay in obtaining needed approvals.

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(U) Important support for General Westmoreland's position in regard to Cambodia was provided by two correspondents who accompanied Mrs. John F. Kennedy on her visit to Cambodia, 1-9 November 1967. The correspondents had been briefed by Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) on where they could expect to find VC/NVA base areas in Cambodia. On 19 November, both correspondents released publicly a story on and photos of an enemy camp in Cambodia. Sihanouk refuted the report but forbade all Western reporters to go near border areas.³⁴ During the visit by Mrs. Kennedy, DORSAL FIN flights had been suspended.³⁵

(S) Another SEACoord meeting held in August 1967 produced the following recommendation for Washington's consideration:

. . . that a carefully documented and verifiable dissemination of available evidence of VC/NVA use of Cambodia be made in world capitals and to the Cambodian Government. This would show increasing US concern that such misuse of Cambodia by VC/NVA was reaching an intolerable level and would lay the necessary psychological and political ground work for more forceful actions should we reach the point where intervention is clearly imperative.³⁶

Such evidence, developed through the Vesuvius Program was subsequently passed to Sihanouk by the Australians.³⁷

(U) During 1966 and 1967, the full weight of US participation in RVN was beginning to show its effect. Review of the major operations and battles occurring during this two-year period shows that the majority were conducted in the provinces adjacent to the Cambodian

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border. For most of them the pattern generally was the same: A gradual enemy supply buildup in RVN from sources in Cambodia; a rapid enemy troop buildup from base areas in Cambodia; sharp engagements with US and ARVN troops as the VC/NVA were detected in RVN; withdrawal of the VC/NVA forces back into Cambodia and subsequent discovery of large stocks of food, weapons, ammunition and other supplies.³⁸ Location of the more significant operations is shown on Map 5.

TET OFFENSIVE TO INCURSION, 1968-70

(TS) One of the most significant events of the war was the enemy's 1968 Tet offensive. Based on indications that the communists were planning large-scale operations in this time frame, COMUSMACV had deployed US units and influenced the deployment of RVNAF units to block any large movement of enemy forces into major population areas, especially in III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ).³⁹ Nonetheless, the enemy was successful in employing the holiday to achieve tactical surprise. Moreover, utilizing base areas in Cambodia and Laos, he had been able to concentrate forces, buildup supplies and prepare for the offensive unmolested.⁴⁰

(TS) Among pre-Tet intelligence reports reaching COMUSMACV was one confirming a large buildup of VC/NVA forces in the "Fish

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Hook" area. In response thereto COMUSMACV requested urgent authority to enter this and other Cambodian sanctuaries when major enemy buildup was detected. Unfortunately, this request was dispatched on 30 January, the day the offensive commenced.⁴¹ No authority to enter Cambodia resulted from this effort.⁴²

(TS) As the VC/NVA were making their preparations, Ambassador Chester Bowles, after having been briefed by members of the MACV Staff on the extent to which the communists were using Cambodia,⁴³ visited Phnom Penh in an effort to influence Sihanouk to take positive steps to curtail the use of his territory by the VC/NVA. The visit completed, he recommended that the US continue the non-belligerent approach, providing Sihanouk with evidence when possessed of the VC/NVA activities taking place in Cambodia.⁴⁴

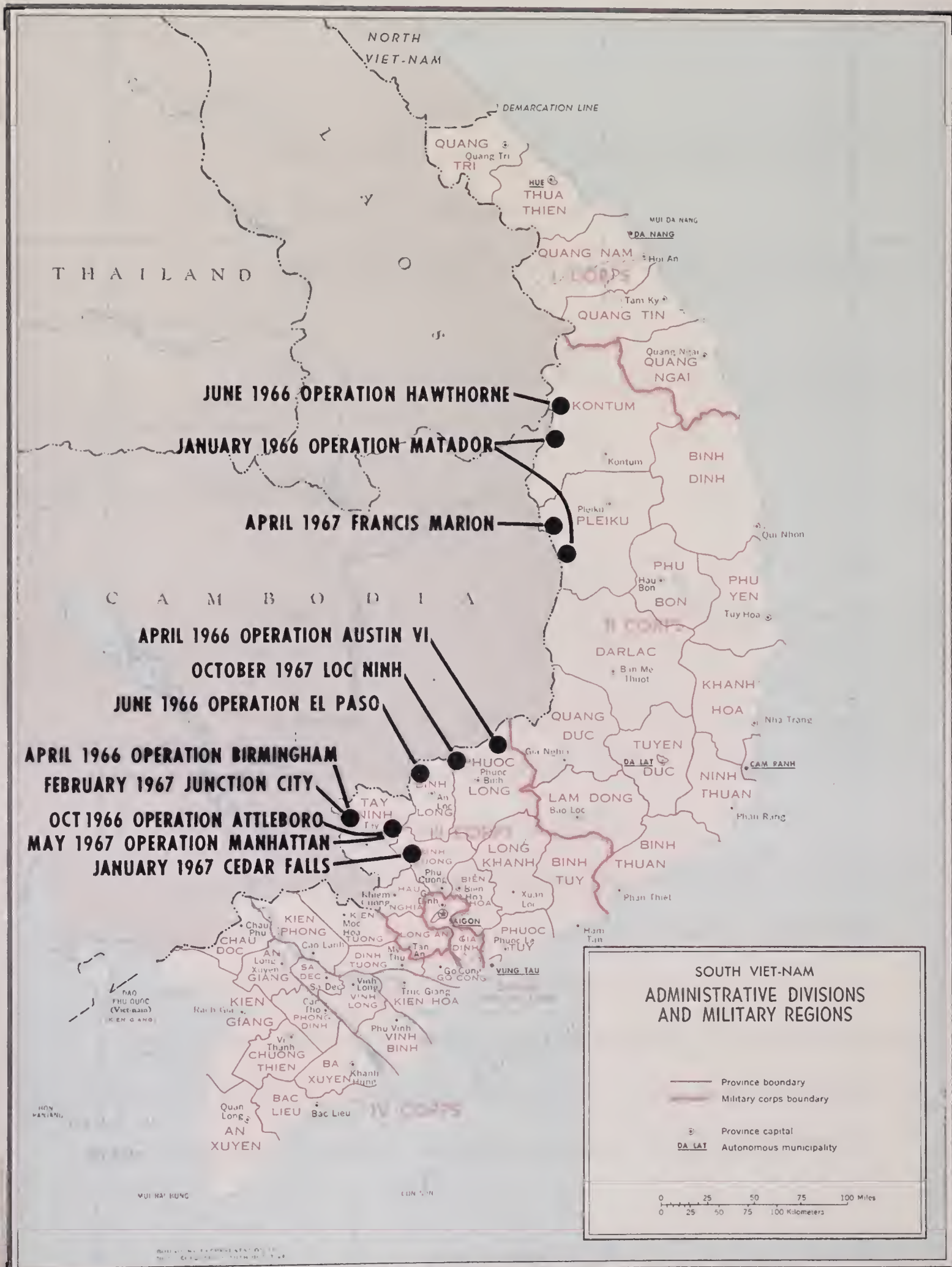
(TS) Subsequent to Tet it was readily apparent to US officials in Southeast Asia that use of Cambodia by the communists was extensive and that the Cambodians themselves were deeply involved. Accordingly, at the SEACoord meeting of 7 March 1968, the following outline of recommended initial and subsequent military actions were made to the Departments of State and Defense:

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Initially

- Relax restrictions on the number, depth and frequency of cross-border operations (DANIEL BOONE);
- Authorize more helicopter support for cross-border operations; and
- Initiate active defensive measures of short duration in the border area.

Subsequently

- Increase aerial reconnaissance efforts in Cambodia;
- Authorize B-52 strikes in unpopulated remote areas astride the RVN-Cambodian border;
- Increase active defensive measures of short duration in remote unpopulated sections of Cambodia by raids, pursuit and destruction of enemy forces retreating into Cambodia; and
- Employ company and battalion-size forces to reinforce reconnaissance and raid actions in order to assist in the disengagement and withdrawal of forces as necessary.⁴⁵

(U) In May 1968, coincidental with the start of peace talks in Paris, the VC/NVA again used staging areas in Cambodia to launch another major offensive into RVN. Although considerable combat activity

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resulted, no major communist political or propaganda objectives were achieved.⁴⁶

(TS) In July, a US manned LCU (landing craft utility) on the Mekong River inadvertently intruded into Cambodian territory and the vessel and crew were detained by the Cambodian Government. In commenting on JCS recommendations for pressures to obtain release, CINCPAC stated that the fundamental US objective should be to compel Cambodia to cease its collaboration with the VC/NVA forces. Accordingly, he recommended that the following positive sequential actions be undertaken:

- Economic measures beginning with curtailment of the supply of POL (petroleum, oils and lubricants) and other products to Cambodia via the Mekong River system;
- Unrestricted pursuit, raids and air attacks on VC/NVA forces in the thinly populated area of Northeast Cambodia and along the entire border area;
- Mining of selected Cambodian harbors and enforcement of a quarantine on the importation of war and war-related materials; and
- Blockade of the port of Sihanoukville.⁴⁷

These recommendations were not considered favorably due to their effect on the diplomatic approach.

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(TS) In September 1968, MACV requested authority for the use of tactical air and artillery in Cambodian border areas against clearly identified VC/NVA targets.⁴⁸ Also in September, continuing to support COMUSMACV's request, the JCS recommended to the Department of Defense that authority be granted to pursue VC/NVA forces into base areas inside Cambodia to a depth of 20 kilometers.⁴⁹ These requests were denied. In December, however, restrictions on DANIEL BOONE operations were relaxed. COMUSMACV was authorized to conduct covert operations in Zone Charlie (see Map 6) without prior Washington approval.⁵⁰

(TS) CINCPAC, in his "Year End Review of Vietnam - 1968," indicated to the JCS that the Cambodian sanctuaries posed a serious threat to the recently inaugurated program to improve and modernize the RVNAF. He went on to state:

Notwithstanding his current military weakness, there are no indications that the enemy has deviated from his goal of both a military and political victory in South Vietnam (SVN). The enemy has utilized the respite from our air and naval attacks to improve his military position in the Laos/Cambodian base areas, and throughout North Vietnam. He has rapidly rebuilt key war-supporting installations and repaired his industrial base. Additionally, recent large increases in the movement of men and supplies toward SVN indicate that the enemy intends to increase greatly his forces in SVN, either in preparation for an anticipated Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) withdrawal, or to re-engage in serious ground conflict as occurred in the first nine months of 1968. If this trend continues, and there appears to be little reason to anticipate otherwise, a direct and continuing threat of substantial proportions will be created for FWMAF early in 1969.⁵¹

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(U) Although the diplomatic approach continued throughout 1969 and into 1970, it was becoming more and more apparent that VC/NVA forces in the southern half of RVN were receiving the bulk of their arms and ammunition through Cambodia, and that the enemy was expanding his logistic activities there. To offset the loss of sea infiltration along the RVN coast and reduction of throughput on the Ho Chi Minh Trail system, more and more use was being made of the port of Sihanoukville. By early 1970, the threat by VC/NVA forces in Cambodia to the Vietnamization policies of the Nixon Administration were being felt acutely.⁵²

INTELLIGENCE DISPUTE

(S) As cited earlier in the chapter, MACV had reported communist discharge of military materiel at Sihanoukville as early as 1963. Subsequently, the headquarters became convinced that the enemy was receiving major logistic support through a system established in Cambodia with the acquiescence, possibly participation, of officials of that country. Basically, the system was believed to provide for receipt of weapons and supplies at Sihanoukville, and for transshipment to the communist base areas just inside the Cambodian border. MACV held the belief that the communist forces in III and IV CTZ's, as well as some troops in the southern half of II CTZ were receiving

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Map 6

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the major portion of their ordnance support in particular from this source.⁵³

(S) In contrast to this position, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the Intelligence and Research Department (INR), Department of State, held the view that the major portion of the logistical support for the communist forces throughout RVN was being delivered along the overland trail system from the north. While they did accept that some arms and ammunition were being smuggled from Cambodia, they maintained that these were being sold by "local Cambodian officials" from their own stocks. They knew that rice and some other foodstuffs were being sold to the VC/NVA by the Cambodians. However, it was their consensus in 1968 that since Sihanouk had been unable to stop these sales, he was attempting to tax them to gain revenue for the state. Finally, they maintained through 1968 that Sihanouk was trying to stop or at least limit the "smuggling" of illicit arms, and that while there were reports that he had made an arrangement with the communists, their validity was doubtful at best.⁵⁴

(S) In late 1968 the United States Intelligence Board established a special team composed of representatives from CIA, DIA and INR to study and evaluate the divergent views on the involvement of

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Cambodia in logistical support of the Vietnamese communists. Listed hereunder are the major conclusions of the team taken from its final report, commonly referred to as the Graham Report:

- There was no significant body of intelligence data in the field that had not been disseminated to Washington. Difference in views arose from analysis of the commonly shared information.

- There was no question that Cambodia had been used by the communists for base areas and sanctuaries.

- There was no question that the Cambodian Army had been involved in the shipment of non-lethal supplies to the Vietnamese communists, such as rice and medical supplies.

- While there was little doubt that the Cambodian Army was engaged on an organized basis in the shipment of some arms, ammunition and certain other war materials, and that this undertaking involved high-ranking Army officers, possibly even General Lon Nol, there was inadequate evidence to establish the existence of a high-level agreement between Sihanouk and the communists. Sihanouk probably was aware of these activities but the extent of his knowledge or complicity in the activity was unknown.

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- The basic channel for movement of arms and ammunition was the overland route from the north.⁵⁵

(S) Early in the summer of 1969, with publication of several CIA intelligence documents, the national level intelligence agencies began to acknowledge a higher level of logistical support to the VC/NVA through the port of Sihanoukville. A July 1969 CIA memorandum⁵⁶ reported that Sihanouk was controlling the arms and materiel shipments to the communists, and that Lon Nol and other key officials were participants. As the year progressed, more of MACV's earlier assessments of the Cambodian involvement were accepted. In an advanced intelligence summary dated 17 December 1969,⁵⁷ DIA included an extensive account of the transshipment of arms, ammunition and other supplies from Sihanoukville to the VC/NVA forces based in Cambodia and operating in southern RVN.

(S) It was not, however, until after the 1970 cross-border operations into Cambodia that the full extent of this support was realized. The CIA finally published studies in September and December 1970⁵⁸ which verified and confirmed MACV's estimates and analyses of the degree of Cambodian involvement in supplying arms and ammunition to the VC/NVA in III and IV CTZ's from 1966-1970. These reports also

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confirmed Forces Armee' Khmer's complicity in the shipment of arms and supplies to the VC/NVA both through the port of Sihanoukville and in extension of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

(S) Statistics published by the Directorate of Intelligence, CIA in December 1970, disclosed that 96 percent of the communist ordnance delivered to VC/NVA forces in III and IV CTZ's, as well as in the southern half of II CTZ from December 1966 to April 1969 was channeled through Sihanoukville.⁵⁹ Of the 21,748 tons of ordnance delivered to Cambodia for the communists, border deliveries of 18,198 tons have been identified:

- Communist ordnance deliveries to Cambodia	
Via Sihanoukville	20,921
Via Laos	<u>827</u>
Total	21,748
- Ordnance deliveries to border areas	
From supplies delivered via Sihanoukville	17,646
From supplies delivered via Laos	<u>552</u>
Total	18,198
- Residual (21,748 minus 18,198)	3,550
- Ordnance remaining at Kompong Speu Depot, March 1970	2,272
- Ordnance still unaccounted for	1,278

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(S) It is relatively certain that the 1,278 tons of ordnance still unaccounted for in border delivery data were, in fact, shipped to final destinations. It is known, for example, that all deliveries via Laos moved immediately to the base camps without going through the warehouse at Kompong Speu. The inventory of 2,272 tons at the Kompong Speu Depot at the time of the 18 March 1970 coup is not a residual, but is shown in documents that detail the number and tonnage of each type of ordnance.

POLITICAL CRISIS IN CAMBODIA, 1969-70

(S) The mounting proposals for incursions into Cambodia were to be influenced significantly by events that were crystalizing in the Cambodian Government itself. On 14 March 1969, Sihanouk, after years of denial, admitted use of Cambodia by the VC/NVA forces. In May, Cambodia instituted an arms embargo against ordnance destined for the VC/NVA. However, while attending Ho Chi Minh's funeral in September, Sihanouk apparently agreed to relax this embargo if no communist support were given to the Cambodian communist rebels (Khmer Rouge).⁶⁰

(S) On 18 September 1969, General Lon Nol, the Cambodian Prime Minister, presented to Sihanouk a comprehensive report on VC/NVA activities in Cambodia. This report appears to mark the

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start of Lon Nol's attempts to curtail Sihanouk's power. Included were data showing communist support of the Khmer Rouge. Indeed, Lon Nol pointed out use of the Khmer Rouge by the VC/NVA as covering forces, and indicated that supply networks existed.⁶¹

(S) On 8 March 1970, demonstrations broke out in several Cambodian border areas in protest over the presence of NVA troops. If not organized by high Cambodian officials who were in disagreement with Sihanouk's policies, they were at least encouraged by them. On 11 March, the North Vietnamese and VC Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) embassies in Phnom Penh were sacked by demonstrators organized by government officials. On 12 March, Lon Nol, in the name of the government, issued an ultimatum demanding that the VC/NVA troops leave Cambodia within 72 hours. At the same time, First Deputy Prime Minister Sirik Matak canceled an existing trade treaty between Cambodia and the PRG.⁶²

(S) On 15 March, Lon Nol's ultimatum expired, its demands unmet. Subsequently, on 18 March, Sihanouk, who had been in France since January, was removed as Chief of State by a unanimous vote of the Cambodian Parliament.⁶³

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US/RVN INCURSION, 1970

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(S) In January and February 1970, COMUSMACV had initiated unilateral US planning for possible cross-border ground operations against lucrative targets in Cambodia.⁶⁴ Following Lon Nol's 15 March ultimatum to the communists and the abrupt change of government in Cambodia, VC/NVA forces redispersed themselves both in RVN and Cambodia, and actively supported efforts to overthrow the new government.⁶⁵ On 26 March, the JCS authorized combined planning for incursions into Cambodia.⁶⁶

(U) On 20 April, President Nixon, announcing future US troop withdrawals from Vietnam, referred to "the enemy's escalation in Laos and Cambodia" and stated that the enemy would be taking "grave risks" if they attempted to use American withdrawals to jeopardize remaining US forces in Vietnam by "increased military action in Vietnam, in Cambodia, or in Laos." Additionally, he stated that if the enemy were to do so, he would "not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation."⁶⁷

(U) As stated by a White House spokesman on 24 April 1970, the North Vietnamese and VC offensive in Cambodia was "a foreign invasion of a neutral country which cannot be considered in any way a pretense of a civil war."⁶⁸ Secretary Rogers, testifying before the

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Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 27 April 1970, was reported to have emphasized that a communist takeover in Cambodia would increase the peril to the US policy of withdrawing troops from the RVN. Further, he mentioned several ARVN incursions into Cambodia against enemy troops and bases that had been "fairly successful." On the same day, a White House press statement indicated that the US had "an overriding interest" in Cambodia in relation to "how a possible communist take-over of Cambodia would affect the security of our forces in Vietnam and the Vietnamization Program."⁶⁹ Two days later, RVNAF, with the help of US advisors and some US tactical air support, air coordination and logistical assistance, launched a large-scale operation into the "Parrot's Beak" area.⁷⁰

(S) As regards Secretary Rogers' reference to "fairly successful" ARVN incursions into Cambodia, it is significant that during the latter part of March and the month of April 1970, liaison between local Cambodian and RVN authorities was established on several occasions along the border in III and IV CTZ's. Cambodian officials reported active efforts by VC/NVA forces in Cambodia to eliminate Cambodian units within a terrain belt of undetermined depth paralleling the border inside Cambodia. Several officials, claiming they were empowered to do so by the government in Phnom Penh, requested RVNAF

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assistance in engaging enemy forces within Cambodia. This led in turn to modest unilateral cross-border forays by RVNAF units supported by mortars, artillery and Vietnamese Air Force strikes. The Vietnamese Navy provided support on the Mekong and Bassac Rivers and related channels. Results achieved by these limited operations were noteworthy in terms not only of casualties inflicted on the enemy and destruction of small bases and supply caches, but in terms of rapprochement between Cambodia and RVN and increased confidence on the part of RVNAF forces.⁷¹

(S) US advisors, with but few exceptions, were informed by their South Vietnamese counterparts of the cross-border operations and in turn reported them through channels to MACV Headquarters. In coordination with the Embassy, MACV instructed its advisors and field commands that advisors were not to accompany RVNAF units into Cambodia, but that they could inform their counterparts that normal US support would continue within RVN. At a later stage during this several week period, US advisors and the senior field commander in III CTZ (Commanding General, II FFORCEV) were authorized to assist RVNAF in concentrating forces on the friendly side of the border and to redispense US ground elements to cover gaps within RVN

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produced by removal of RVNAF units for use in cross-border operations. Generally speaking, the US posture was one of encouraging the GVN and its forces while avoiding direct participation.⁷²

(TS) As GVN cross-border activity stepped up in cooperation with the Cambodians, Washington issued instructions to the US Ambassador and COMUSMACV to intercede with the GVN to terminate such activity. Rationale supporting this guidance cited the danger of generating concern within the US public that the US was party to widening the war and violating Cambodian neutrality. The guidance emphasized need to impress upon the GVN that hostile US public reaction could jeopardize support of programs for RVN and undermine Vietnamization. Representations made by the Embassy to President Thieu and by MACV to the Chief, RVN Joint General Staff, succeeded in halting the cross-border effort, although not without some dismay on the part of various RVNAF leaders who were tasting the fruits of anti-sanctuary success for the first time. Appropriate instructions were issued to US advisors and senior field commanders to uphold the new guidance.⁷³

(TS) Within a matter of days following the developments just cited, Washington instructions that reflected a reevaluation of the situation authorized the Embassy and MACV to inform the GVN of US agreement

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to resumption of cross-border activity. This having been done, selective operations were resumed under the previously stipulated ground rules governing US participation.⁷⁴

(U) President Nixon announced on 30 April that US forces, "in cooperation with the armed forces of the RVN," would launch attacks "to clean out major enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border." He said that "the enemy, in the past two weeks, has stepped up his guerrilla actions, and he is concentrating his main forces in the sanctuaries where they are building up to launch massive attacks on our forces and those of South Vietnam." He stated that these [US/RVN] operations were "not an invasion of Cambodia" because "the areas in which these attacks will be launched are completely occupied and controlled by North Vietnamese forces." He further stated that cleaning out of the sanctuaries was "indispensable for the continuing success" of the program of withdrawing US forces from Vietnam, was "essential" to keeping US casualties at an absolute minimum, and would serve the purpose "of ending the war in Vietnam and winning the just peace we all desire."⁷⁵

(S) As President Nixon was making his announcement (1 May in Vietnam), US forces began operations against enemy base areas in Cambodia. Although these forces were limited to penetrations of not

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more than 30 kilometers,⁷⁶ most base areas were within that distance of the border. Eleven major operations with US participation were conducted. By 30 June 1970, all US forces, to include advisors, had been withdrawn to the RVN side of the border.⁷⁷ Results indicated that the enemy losses were heavy: Over 10,000 were killed; over 22,600 weapons, 1,765 tons of ammunition and 6,880 tons of rice were captured.⁷⁸ Another result of prime significance was the administration's decision, influenced by public and congressional pressure, in the latter instance the Cooper-Church Amendment, not to permit reentry of US ground forces into Cambodia subsequent to 30 June 1970.

(U) Indicative of the effect of pressure generated against administration decisions and policy by anti-war and "dove" elements within the US public, was the emotionally charged reaction to the President's announcement of incursion into the Cambodian border base areas by US forces. The widespread incidence of campus disorder and violence, demonstrations, opposition pronouncements by prominent public figures and congressional reaction are seen as having influenced the decision to restrict US operations within Cambodia to a 60-day period and to limit the depth to which US forces could penetrate. In the latter regard, while it is true that the bulk of the enemy's supplies were cached within the 30 kilometer limit, the enemy was known to have moved appreciable stores beyond the 30 kilometer line into

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what became deeper sanctuary beyond the self-imposed limit on US probing. Insofar as duration of the operations is concerned, they could not have been prolonged for an appreciable period beyond 30 June because of the onset of southwest monsoonal rains.

(TS) In extension of the foregoing, three examples of political guidance that have exerted governing influence on military planning and operations as they affect Cambodia are pertinent.

- The first is a TOP SECRET State Department message of 9 May 1970 addressed to Embassy Phnom Penh, Embassy Saigon, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV. Selective passages are quoted:

. . . The purpose of this message is to give you in somewhat more detail the thinking here with respect to our objectives and role in Cambodia. As stated in our first message on this general subject, we have seen our problem as essentially one of navigating between providing enough support and reassurance to the Government of Cambodia (GOC) so that it will have the morale and determination, as well as enhance its capability, to cope with the enemy; while at the same time not leaving the GOC with any misleading or false expectations as to the amounts and types of assistance that we are likely to provide. . .

We continue to draw the distinction set forth in the President's April 30 address between expanding the war into Cambodia and the actions we are taking to clean out the major VC/NVA sanctuaries in the Cambodian-Vietnamese border in defense of Americans in Viet-Nam and the Viet-namization program in SVN, even though it continues to be our hope that actions will help relieve VC/NVA pressures on the Cambodian forces and thus indirectly support the GOC. The President has announced his intention to withdraw American forces as quickly as the operations against the sanctuary areas have achieved their objectives, which is primarily the destruction of supplies and facilities. As you know, the congress has been assured that these operations will not extend deeper into Cambodia than sanctuary areas or up to about 21 miles and that it is expected that

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all of the forces will have been withdrawn to SVN in about six to eight weeks, or roughly by July 1. While these limits apply to a lesser degree to GVN forces, we would not like to see the GVN in a deep, substantial or prolonged extension of hostilities into Cambodia and would find it difficult to support if it did. . .

- The second example relates to a 21 May 1970 TOP SECRET State Department message to the same addressees as for the first, with Embassy Bangkok added for information. Again selected passages are quoted:

Operations of ARVN forces must be consistent with the objectives of Vietnamization. In Cambodia, therefore, they should be limited to North Vietnamese occupied territory where enemy military activities threaten Vietnamization. ARVN forces must strengthen their capacity to fight the NVA/VC in South Vietnam. We should accordingly urge GVN to keep eyes on NVA/VC forces in South Vietnam and to focus effort on exploitation of opportunities to seriously damage those forces which destruction of supplies in sanctuaries now affords.

We want to encourage South Vietnamese to maintain a flexible posture concerning future operations in Cambodia, which would have principal objectives of (a) deterring enemy from reestablishing his previous posture in sanctuary areas threatening allied forces in South Vietnam and (b) deterring enemy from moving aggressively against Phnom Penh and the port areas of southern Cambodia by creating uncertainty about GVN reaction.

We want to make clear that restrictions which apply to U.S. forces after June 30 do not repeat not apply to SVN forces. We would favor short duration ARVN operations in sanctuary areas where required to protect ARVN/US forces and promote progress of Vietnamization. Fact that ARVN forces free to conduct such operations will serve as deterrent to enemy efforts to reoccupy and rebuild bases and sanctuaries and, should he attempt to do so, should permit their quick neutralization. . . .

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- The third and last example is the unclassified 30 June 1970 Cooper-Church Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which in essence stated:

. . . it is hereby provided that unless specifically authorized by law hereafter enacted, no funds authorized or appropriated pursuant to this act or any other law may be expended after July 1, 1970, for the purposes of;

- Retaining United States forces in Cambodia,
- Paying the compensation or allowances of, or otherwise supporting, directly or indirectly, any United States personnel in Cambodia who furnish military instruction to Cambodian forces or engage in any combat activity in support of Cambodian forces,
- Entering into or carrying out any contract or agreement to provide military instruction in Cambodia, or to provide persons to engage in any combat activity in support of Cambodian forces, or
- Conducting any combat activity in the air above Cambodia in direct support of Cambodian forces.

Nothing contained in this section shall be deemed to impugn the constitutional power of the President as Commander in Chief, including the exercise of that constitutional power which may be necessary to protect the lives of United States armed forces wherever deployed. . . 79

(S) Concurrently with Senate passage of the Cooper-Church Amendment, the previous restrictions on US, RVN, and FW forces were relaxed:

- US commanders could take necessary counteractions into Cambodia in self-defense against VC/NVA attacks from within Cambodia;

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- While barred from attacking villages or populated areas, the US commander could fire artillery or employ air strikes against confirmed enemy positions firing against him, and even maneuver US troops into Cambodia to preserve his forces.

- US and FWMAF were authorized to provide artillery fire support to RVNAF/FWMAF cross-border operations from gun positions in South Vietnam, clearance for such artillery fire had to be obtained through RVNAF/FANK channels.

- Artillery fire was authorized on targets developed by cross-border operations or acquired by other means, e.g., air reconnaissance, sensors, side-looking aerial radar.⁸⁰

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(C) Problems created by the VC/NVA use of Cambodia for supply and sanctuary brought US political objectives and military considerations into sharp contrast. On the one hand was the political objective to avoid expanding the war and to keep Cambodia neutral. On the other was the ever increasing threat to the security of RVN by VC/NVA forces which could use remote, well-supplied base areas in Cambodia to support their aggression into RVN. Throughout the period 1963-1970, an ultimate objective both politically and militarily was to remove the threat of these sanctuaries.

(TS) It became apparent to COMUSMACV that the VC and subsequently the NVA were using Cambodia as a sanctuary and source of supply. Unfortunately, friendly intelligence was unable to produce conclusive and irrefutable evidence that such was the case. Aerial photography was not permitted nor were covert cross-border operations authorized. Effort⁵ to achieve this evidence initially was not permitted because of diplomatic endeavor to move the Cambodian Government toward a neutral position. As the danger presented by the Cambodian base areas to US and GVN forces increased, intelligence efforts were focused on Cambodia, and covert air and ground reconnaissance were authorized, first in the tri-border area, and by 1968 encompassing the entire border region.

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(S) As the war progressed, the VC/NVA, with increasing cooperation of high Cambodian officials, were required to establish a complex logistical support system in Cambodia in order to maintain the large forces being infiltrated into RVN. Until 1966, when US air interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, together with effective coastal surveillance, began to reduce enemy logistic throughput significantly, major use of Cambodia as a supply source was not imperative. However, once it became evident that the increased forces in IV, III and southern II CTZ's could not be supported adequately through Laos and by sea, Cambodia became essential as a supply base.

(U) Political developments within Cambodia during this entire period were confused. Desiring to remain completely neutral, the influential leaders in Cambodia, to include Sihanouk, did not wish to offend the communists. At the same time they had no desire to surrender control of their country to the communists. When use of Cambodian territory by the enemy became so pronounced that national sovereignty was threatened, a coup resulted and the new leadership initiated action designed to defend the nation. Active cooperation in connection with US-RVN incursions into the border base areas was one such action.

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(U) Prior to the incursions the political goal of attempting to keep Cambodia neutral imposed serious handicaps on attainment of allied objectives in Vietnam. Moreover, the several year ban on decisive friendly operations to neutralize the enemy's base and supply structure inside Cambodia, and to disrupt his use of Cambodian territory for sanctuary, translated into high casualties on the allied side. In a word, prolonged adherence to the diplomatic approach provides a classic example of fighting a war with "one hand tied behind the back."

CONCLUSIONS

(U) US political restrictions on conduct of operations against the Cambodian sanctuaries during the 1965 - May 1970 period enhanced the enemy's combat and logistic posture, placed allied forces in RVN at decided intelligence and operational disadvantage, and produced unnecessarily heavy friendly casualties, military and civilian, over an extended period.

(S) Divergence of professional judgment on the nature and extent of VC/NVA supply activity in Cambodia as between COMUSMACV and Washington level intelligence agencies served to delay decisions in support of the military's quest for authority to counter enemy exploitation of Cambodia.

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(U) Opposition by segments of the US public and the Congress to the US-RVN incursions into the enemy's Cambodian base areas affected decisions on the depth of penetration by US forces of the sanctuary complex, duration of operations by US forces and prohibition against reentry of US ground units into Cambodia following termination of the incursion.

(U) Apart from their military value, US-RVN operations to clean out the enemy's base areas in Cambodia reaped rich rewards in terms of raising RVNAF morale and confidence, stimulating "offensive mindedness" on the part of RVN military leadership and providing an intangible but nonetheless invaluable boost to Vietnamization.

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CHAPTER VI

PRIOR PROPOSALS FOR AND THE LIMITED INCURSION INTO CAMBODIA (U)

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CHAPTER VI

PRIOR PROPOSALS FOR AND THE LIMITED INCURSION INTO CAMBODIA

CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

1963

- Feb - (U) Prince Sihanouk visits Peking.
- May - (U) Friendship treaty between Peking and Phnom Penh signed.
- Jun - (U) Henry Cabot Lodge appointed US Ambassador.
- Aug - (U) Cambodia breaks diplomatic relations with RVN.
- Nov - (U) President Diem overthrown and slain in coup.
- Nov - (U) Cambodia requests US to cease providing economic assistance.

1964

- Jun - (U) General Westmoreland assumes command of MACV.
- Jun - (U) General Maxwell D. Taylor named to replace Ambassador Lodge
- Oct - (U) Prince Sihanouk signs joint communique in Peking condemning US actions in Indochina and China.
- Dec - (U) US/Cambodian talks aimed at resolving difference held in New Delhi, Broken off and not reconvened.

1965

- Mar - (U) First US ground combat troops (US Marine Corps) arrive in RVN.
- May - (U) Cambodia breaks diplomatic relations with US.

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- May - (U) 173rd Airborne Brigade arrives in RVN.
- Aug - (U) Ambassador Lodge replaces Ambassador Taylor.
- Nov - (U) Ia Drang Valley Battle.

1966

- May - (TS) Planning and training for covert cross-border operations authorized.
- Aug - (U) President deGaulle pays state visit to Cambodia. France declares respect for Cambodia's territorial integrity.
- Sep - (U) Contemplated visit to Cambodia by US special envoy Governor Harriman canceled due to alleged border incident.
- Oct - (S) Chinese ship unloads munitions at Sihanoukville.
- Nov - (TS) SEACoord meeting recommends sequential non-belligerent approach toward Cambodia.
- Nov - (S) Second Chinese ship unloads munitions at Sihanoukville.

1967

- Apr - (U) Ellsworth P. Bunker replaces Lodge as Ambassador. Lon Nol resigns as Prime Minister of Cambodia.
- May - (TS) US covert cross-border operations authorized in tri-border area.
- Jun - (U) Cambodia establishes relations with National Liberation Front.
- Jul - (TS) Overflights of Cambodia authorized.
- Aug - (U) NVN Embassy opens in Phnom Penh.
- Sep - (U) Thieu elected President of RVN.
- Sep - (U) Sihanouk publicly attacks Peking for interfering in Cambodian affairs.

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- Nov - (U) Mrs. Kennedy visits Cambodia.
- Nov - (U) Three American correspondents discover VC base in Cambodia.

1968

- Jan - (U) Ambassador Bowles visits Phnom Penh.
- Jan - (U) Tet Offensive begins in RVN.
- Mar - (TS) Southeast Asia Coordinating Committee (SEACoord) meeting recommends military actions against Cambodia.
- May - (U) Talks between US, NVN, RVN start in Paris. Second VC/NVA offensive begins.
- Jul - (U) General Creighton W. Abrams assumes command of MACV.
- Jul - (U) Admiral McCain assumes duties as CINCPAC.
- Jul - (U) Lon Nol becomes Prime Minister of Cambodia.
- Jul - (U) LCU strays across border and is captured by Cambodians.
- Sep - (U) Special US Envoy Eugene Black visits Cambodia to discuss Mekong River development.
- Oct - (U) 1st Cavalry Division relocates from I Corps to Tay Ninh Province III Corps.
- Dec - (U) LCU crewmen released.
- Dec - (C) Graham report issued by Washington level intelligence agencies. States bulk of VC/NVA supplies coming through Laos.

1969

- Jul - (U) Diplomatic relations re-established between US and Cambodia.
- Jul - (S) CIA acknowledges large shipments of arms and ammunition to VC/NVA through Sihanoukville.

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Nov - (S) Lon Nol presents Sihanouk with comprehensive picture of VC/NVA activity and of their support to Khmer Rouge.

1970

Jan - (U) Sihanouk leaves for France.

Mar - (U) Demonstrations in Phnom Penh against NVN and PRG Embassies.

Mar - (U) Lon Nol issues ultimatum to VC/NVA to leave Cambodian territory.

Mar - (U) ARVN task force makes shallow penetration of Cambodia.

Mar - (U) Sihanouk removed as Chief of State by unanimous vote of Parliament.

Apr - (U) ARVN conducts large operation into Cambodia.

May - (U) US forces enter Cambodia.

Jun - (U) US forces withdrawn from Cambodia.

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CHAPTER VII

THE PRISONER OF WAR ISSUE (U)

PURPOSE

(U) The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extent to which prisoner of war (PW) considerations influenced the conduct of United States (US) military operations in Southeast Asia (SEA).

APPROACH

(U) The emphasis in this chapter will be on five main aspects of the many-sided prisoner of war issue.

- Policies of the Administration concerning release of US prisoners of war;

- Efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to induce all parties to the war to abide by the rules of the Geneva Convention of 1949;

- Attitude of North Vietnam (NVN) and the Viet Cong (VC) toward the status and treatment of PW;

- Release and repatriation of PW by the adversaries; and,

- Heightened emphasis on development of intelligence on location of PW and a viable capability for effecting their recovery.

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OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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(U) There are several other considerations affecting or related to the prisoner of war issue which deserve brief mention. The policy wherein responsibility for the internment of all North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and VC prisoners resided with the Government of Vietnam (GVN) was a sound one. The potential problems of US custody of these prisoners -- such as those experienced by US forces guarding North Korean prisoners during the Korean conflict -- were precluded. The policy also kept down the requirement for military police in the force structure.

(U) Inadequacy of data precluded efforts to determine accurately the influence exerted by North Vietnamese and VC treatment of prisoners on the morale and effectiveness of US forces in Southeast Asia. Based on his Vietnam experience, however, the author considers that publicity on enemy treatment of US prisoners, such as that provided by Major James N. Rowe after his escape and Navy Lieutenant (JG) Robert Frishman after his release, strengthened the US serviceman's natural resolve not to be taken prisoner.

(U) In the same vein, it is considered that troop morale in Southeast Asia was enhanced by certain events, such as:

- The Son Tay raid;
- Private efforts, such as those of H. Ross Perot, to bring relief to US prisoners of war;

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- ICRC and US governmental efforts to ensure more humanitarian treatment of PW and to secure their early release; and,

- The release of approximately 60 prisoners by North Vietnam and the VC from February 1967 to date.

(U) At the same time, the author has concluded that troop morale has been degraded on a minor, uneven and ill-defined basis, but not to a degree resulting in known cases of inability or failure to fulfill mission requirements. Principal factors are:

- Lack of encouraging progress in obtaining release of US prisoners of war;

- Domestic political exploitation of the PW issue.

IMPACT OF PW CONSIDERATIONS ON US MILITARY OPERATIONS

(U) The overriding conclusion insofar as the PW problem is concerned is that at most it exerted only minor influence on the conduct of military operations in SEA. While the history of the war is replete with specific instances in which localized and time-limited military activities were influenced by PW considerations, evidence is lacking to support a finding that the latter impacted importantly on overall conduct of the war by US and allied forces. Examples of influence at local level include:

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- PW releases and truces associated therewith;
- Operations designed to liberate prisoners from known or suspected enemy PW camps;
- Modification of operational plans to preclude casualties among prisoners believed to be in such camps;
- Need to strengthen the security of PW camps during periods of heightened enemy threat; and
- Diversion of military construction capabilities to improve and expand PW facilities.

ADMINISTRATION POLICY CONCERNING US PW'S

(U) Simply stated, US policy throughout the war in regard to prisoners of war has been that all of the adversaries should abide by the conditions of the 1949 Geneva Convention. In February 1970, President Nixon restated this policy:

This is not a political or military issue, but a matter of basic humanity. There may be disagreement about other aspects of this conflict, but there can be no disagreement in humane treatment for prisoners of war. I state again our readiness to proceed at once for the release of prisoners of war on both sides.¹

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(U) A year later, on 25 February 1971, President Nixon, apparently trying to prod the North Vietnamese into action on the question of repatriation, linked US troop withdrawal to the release of US prisoners. He stated that US troops would remain in Vietnam as long as US prisoners are held by NVN. Additionally, he stipulated that:

We and the South Vietnamese have made intensive efforts this past year to secure better treatment and release of Allied prisoners -- through global diplomacy, through proposals in Paris, and through the courageous raid at Son Tay. Congressional expressions have been valuable in underlining American public concern. The world increasingly condemned the other side's practices, and the UN General Assembly passed a resolution this fall which underscored the international obligation to treat prisoners humanely.

I repeat my October 7, [1970] proposal for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war held by both sides. All prisoners, journalists, and other civilian captives should be released now to return to the place of their choice. Such action would not only meet humanitarian concerns, it might also lead to progress on other aspects of a peace settlement.²

(U) On 16 April 1971, the President extended the foregoing by stating that while ". . . our goal is total withdrawal . . . as long as the prisoner issue remains unresolved and the South Vietnamese still are unable to defend themselves against the Communists . . . we will have forces there."³

(U) When analyzed within the context of the administration's overall Vietnamization objectives, it would appear that the PW/withdrawal linkage is aimed more at generating political/psychological pressure and leverage than at maintaining a major military threat. This

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consideration notwithstanding, it is evident that the US has made release of its prisoners a condition precedent for any settlement, negotiated or de facto, involving complete withdrawal of its military forces from the RVN. Nor can one fail to discern the possibility of repetition of the negotiations which ended the Korean conflict, wherein the fate of prisoners of war exerted dramatic influence on the settlement as a whole.

ICRC EFFORTS

(U) On 11 June 1965, as a result of increasing force levels and combat operations in South Vietnam, the ICRC addressed a letter to the governments of the United States, South Vietnam and North Vietnam. The letter pointed out that each of the three governments had ratified or adhered to the 1949 Geneva Convention for the Protection of Victims of War and reminded them of their specific obligations under the convention. The ICRC also asked to be informed of the measures being taken by each addressee to carry out its obligations.⁴ In part, the latter entail:

- Prompt release of names of all PW;
- Inspection of prison camps by neutral delegates of the ICRC;
- Regular flow of correspondence between PW and their families;
- Humane treatment of prisoners;

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- Collection and treatment of sick and wounded; and
- Release of all seriously sick and wounded prisoners.

(U) The ICRC also delivered a copy of the letter to the National Liberation Front (NLF).⁵

(C) The United States in its reply stated that it "has always abided by the humanitarian principles enunciated in the Geneva Conventions and will continue to do so."⁶ It has been US policy throughout that the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention applies to the Vietnam conflict and should be adhered to by the US, the RVN and other allied forces. For example, the US consistently has urged the South Vietnamese to comply with ICRC standards in connection with prison camp standards, visits by neutral observers and the publication of prisoner of war lists.⁷

(S) The Republic of Vietnam stated it was "fully prepared to respect the provisions of the Geneva Convention and to contribute actively to the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure their application."⁸ Although there have been instances of South Vietnamese failure to live up to the Geneva Conventions, observation by reliable US and allied officials manifests that, in the main, NVN and VC prisoners have been accorded better food and shelter than major segments of the South Vietnamese who have challenged the ICRC to show definitive progress in getting NVN and the VC to comply with the Convention. The

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North Vietnamese Red Cross, however, has opposed the ICRC position and has parroted Hanoi's attitude, summarized below, concerning its obligations under the Convention.⁹

NVN AND VC ATTITUDES

(U) North Vietnam's reply, while difficult to evaluate otherwise, made it clear that it would regard "pilots who have carried out pirate-raids" over its territory as "major criminals . . . liable for judgement in accordance with the laws of [North Vietnam] although captured pilots are well treated."¹⁰ On later occasions, the North Vietnamese have repeated these claims and have stated that prisoners are not entitled to protection under the Convention because a declaration of war has been made by neither the United States nor North Vietnam. This contention being entirely invalid under the terms thereof, it can be asserted unequivocally that North Vietnam has refused to comply with the provisions of the 1949 Convention.^{11*} At the same time, the North Vietnamese continue to assert that they treat all prisoners humanely, even though not obligated to do so.

(U) The NLF replied that it was not bound by the Convention in that as insurgents they were not subject to previous actions taken by the

* Common Article 2 of the Geneva Convention of 1949 states: ". . . the present Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by any of them.

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government they were attempting to overthrow. Nonetheless, the NLF maintained that the prisoners it held were humanely treated, especially the sick and wounded.¹²

(S) In spite of claims on the part of Hanoi and the NLF, evidence that US prisoners of war have been mistreated is accumulating. Physical and mental abuse, including solitary confinement, have been commonplace. Prisoners have been paraded in public and forced to make statements designed to convey the impression that all prisoners are well treated. In addition, the North Vietnamese have refused to allow the ICRC or any other impartial body to visit its prison camps. Mail privileges have been withheld or at best curtailed. Complete prisoner lists have not been provided.

(S) Meanwhile, however, the North Vietnamese appear to be interested in keeping their prisoners alive. Primary reasons for this policy, rather than being humanitarian in character, appear to be rooted in desire to:

- Avoid adverse world opinion and judgment;
- Generate leverage for use in connection with negotiations;

and

- Attain psychological warfare objectives exemplified by use of "confessions of war crimes" in efforts to convince world opinion that the US is the aggressor.¹³

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(C) Similarly, captured documents reveal that official VC policy toward PW's is one of leniency and humanitarianism for political expediency. Prisoners generally are fed and provided medical care within the VC ability to provide them. On the other hand, caging and shackling are commonly used to prevent escape, and there have been occasions wherein the fundamental policy has been violated.

(C) On 24 December 1969, for example, the bodies of two US servicemen who had been executed in 1966 were recovered.¹⁴ On another occasion, on 20 May 1967, two US prisoners of war were tortured, then murdered at a church at Ngo Xa Dang, three miles from Quang Tri City.¹⁵

(S) A VC directive captured in 1967 provided guidelines for treatment of US and allied prisoners. Among its statements was the following:

There are also some cadre who do not want to escort the prisoners due to fear of hardships. They willingly create occasions for the prisoners to escape in order to kill them. As mentioned before, if many US soldiers are captured, our political struggle will have greater influence. Therefore, we should try to capture US prisoners and evacuate them to our base.¹⁶

(U) Over the years, the ICRC repeatedly has called upon the North Vietnamese to live up to its obligations under the Geneva Convention. To date, with one major exception, despite much talk and many promises

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on Hanoi's part, the status and lot of US prisoners of war remain unchanged from that prevailing at the time of their reply to the ICRC letter of 11 June 1965. A major exception is the NVN position on war crimes trials for captured pilots. Two central points affect the trial issue:

- Whether the pilots are entitled to prisoner of war status;
and

- Whether the North Vietnamese have the right to try them for alleged war crimes.¹⁷

(U) In relation to the foregoing, it is to be stressed that the pilots are members of the US Armed Forces, were captured while flying combat missions over North Vietnam, wore US flight uniforms and made no attempt to hide their identity. On this basis, they clearly are entitled to prisoner of war status.¹⁸

(U) While not contesting these facts, Hanoi goes beyond them by asserting -- without benefit of trial -- that since the pilots are "war criminals" they are no longer entitled to prisoner of war status.¹⁹ Such a position is, in itself, a violation of the Convention.

(U) Reaction to the North Vietnamese threat in 1966 to try captured pilots as war criminals was immediate and highly vocal. A cross-section of world opinion condemned or opposed the threat, "including

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those who sided with the United States position in Vietnam, those who opposed it, and those who were neutral."²⁰

- United Nations Secretary General U Thant warned North Vietnam that "the possible trial of American prisoners is certain to generate still more intense escalation of the war."²¹

- Pope Paul cautioned that mistreatment of prisoners by North Vietnam would result in "grave consequences."²²

- President Lyndon B. Johnson, while not stating what the US would do were our pilots to be put on trial, announced that the US would react accordingly.²³

- A group of US Senate "doves," headed by Senator Frank Church of Idaho, appealed to the North Vietnamese not to try the pilots.²⁴

(U) The worldwide reaction apparently did not go unheeded by Hanoi. On 23 July 1966, Ho Chi Minh declared that no trials were "in view" for the captured American pilots.²⁵

(U) As it developed, Ho's pronouncement proved to be more in the nature of a tactical adjustment than a reversal of policy. A later statement held that the "main criminals" were not captured pilots, "but the persons who sent them there [to NVN] - Johnson, Rusk, McNamara -- these are the ones who should be brought to trial."²⁶

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Nonetheless, the fact that no known trials have taken place nor appear to be in the offing suggests that North Vietnam is at times responsive to the weight of world opinion and is not unmindful of the absence of precedent for such action under international law.

RELEASE OF PRISONERS BY THE ADVERSARIES

(S) The propaganda value to the enemy of publicity on captured American pilots has been paralleled by the propaganda value to all of the adversaries of selective release of prisoners.

(S) Focussing first on the friendly side, it is significant that the South Vietnamese have released NVA prisoners to demonstrate their humanitarianism and to demonstrate that North Vietnam, contrary to its public claims, has troops in the South. The United States has supported this program in the hope that US prisoners would, in turn, be released.

(C) During Tet of 1967 (annual celebration of the Lunar New Year), 28 sick and wounded NVN prisoners were repatriated by the RVN across the Ben Hai River in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). They were met and accepted by officials from NVN.²⁷ Another illustration of friendly initiatives of this type is found in release on 12 June 1967 at the same site of forty additional NVN prisoners who qualified medically in accordance with articles 109 and 110 of the 1949 Convention.²⁸

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(S) On 18 August 1967, General Westmoreland recommended to Ambassador Bunker that repatriation be stepped up. His rationale included the view that repatriations rejected Hanoi's assertions that no NVA troops were in South Vietnam, put pressure on North Vietnam to repatriate US seriously wounded and sick, and promised to induce other NVA troops to surrender.²⁹ Based on subsequent coordination with the GVN:

- On 21 October 1968, fourteen prisoners who had been members of a NVN Navy patrol boat crew were released twelve miles off the southern coast of NVN. A 36-hour stand down of military operations in the area of release was agreed upon and observed by the US, GVN and NVN.³⁰

- On 30 November 1968, in simultaneous ceremonies in Saigon, Da Nang, and Pleiku, 140 prisoners of all ages who had been drafted into the service of the VC were released. They had been afforded the option of going to North Vietnam, but all chose to stay in the South.³¹

- July of 1970 signaled another special truce featuring the return of 62 sick and wounded prisoners and 24 fishermen by junk near the DMZ.³²

- On 24 January 1971, thirty-seven NVN prisoners were returned to NVN across the Ben Hai River in the DMZ. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) had declared a 15-hour ceasefire to coincide with this action. Once the release was effected, the RVNAF

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escort which had accompanied the prisoners was taken under small-arms and mortar fire from within NVN and suffered one casualty, wounded in action.³³

(U) For their part the NVA and VC have released a small number of US servicemen in an apparent effort:

- To demonstrate that US prisoners are in fact treated "humanely";

and

- To exploit attempts at "brainwashing" certain of those released.

(C) In connection with the first general election in NVN in 1967, one US prisoner was released; two others received similar treatment during the Tet holiday period; and three others later were turned over to a member of a US anti-war organization.³⁴

(C) During Tet 1968, in Vientiane, Laos, three US pilots were released into the custody of representatives from an American peace group.³⁵

(C) In December 1968, the VC, via a radio broadcast, proposed a release of US prisoners to be negotiated by US/VC representatives near Tay Ninh City, RVN. The demand by the VC for a 72-hour truce during this proposal was rejected by the US and GVN in favor of safe conduct in a specified zone for eight hours. Three enlisted personnel were released on 1 January 1969, one suffering from a head wound which resulted in his death after his return to the US.³⁶

(S) Three prisoners, to include Lieutenant (JG) Frishman, USN, were released in Vientiane in August 1969. Frishman later talked quite

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frankly about the inhumane treatment accorded US prisoners in NVN, although he did give credit to the North Vietnamese doctors for saving his arm.³⁷

(C) Six other US prisoners were released in Vietnam - four near Tam Ky and two near Bu Prang, by the VC during October-December 1969. All were released in proximity to friendly units and were left to make contact on their own.³⁸

(U) While these individual releases generally were hailed with understandable hope, there was no consistent pattern nor clearly discernible motive on which to judge and react to the enemy's actions. Other than for the isolated truces, these events had negligible effect on normal operations, much less the overall war effort.

PW RECOVERY EFFORTS

(TS) In June 1965, the US Ambassador in Saigon established a Committee on Prisoners and Detainees with membership composed of representatives from each element of the Country Team. Later a Joint Recovery Center was established under Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV).

(TS-LD) The number of US detained or missing personnel in SEA having risen during 1965 and 1966, COMUSMACV activated a Joint Personnel Recovery Center (JPRC) in September 1966. The principal

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objective of this organization was defined as return of missing, captured, detained and evading US personnel to US control. In time its major functions have grown to include:

- Collation, evaluation, and dissemination of all data concerning missing and detained FWMAF personnel and post search and rescue (SAR) recovery operations;

- Establishment of evasion and escape procedures;

- Establishment of a capability within MACV for personnel recovery operations subsequent to SAR efforts; and

- Monitorship and coordination of recovery operations with agencies external to MACV during execution of approved plans.³⁹

(S) JPRC has no forces under its operational control. It recommends to MACV the unit to be tasked to plan and carry out a recovery operation.

(TS) Recovery operations beyond the borders of RVN require coordination at the highest military, government, and diplomatic levels. No JPRC sponsored operations have been authorized or attempted in NVN since the bombing halt of 1968.⁴⁰

(C) The cumulative results through 1970 for JPRC sponsored programs are:⁴¹

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- Free World PW's Recovered - 9
- Vietnamese PW's Recovered - 483
- Free World Escapees Recovered - 10
- Remains Recovered - 88
- Rewards Paid - \$12,149.00
- Leaflets Dropped - 224 Million

(TS-LD) An example of a successful PW recovery operation coordinated by the JPRC is one conducted on 22 August 1970 near Vi Thanh in the lower Mekong Delta. In brief:

. . . Information concerning a VC PW camp was received by the [US Navy] SEALs at approximately 1800H 21 August 1970 from an escapee. Coordination was immediately effected with the Province Headquarters for support to include: gunfire support from a US destroyer; bombing support from the Australian Air Force B-57's; gunships and RF/PF forces. The ground units were inserted along a beach line to the east of the reported camp at 0910H 22 August 1970. The B-57's bombed to the south. Rocket and minigun fire was applied north and west of camp. Naval gunfire and gunships were directed to the south of the camp when it was discovered that the VC camp personnel and PW's were being evacuated to the south. The intent was to apply sufficient pressure so that the VC guards would abandon the PW's. The operation was successful and resulted in the recovery of 28 ARVN. There were no friendly casualties and three VC were KIA. No US PWs had been in this camp. The success of the operation is attributable primarily to the quick reaction and coordination effected between all commands.⁴²

(TS) Planning currently is underway at Pacific Command Headquarters to provide a continuing theatre-wide recovery capability for the post-Vietnam period.⁴³

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CONCLUSION

(U) Although the status of prisoners of war, particularly that of the captured US pilots has generated intense public concern, motivated official and private initiatives designed to improve the situation, and prompted development of a sophisticated PW recovery mechanism, it has exerted only minor influence on the conduct of military operations in SEA.

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CHAPTER VII

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CHAPTER VIII

REDUCTION OF UNITED STATES FORCES (U)

PURPOSE

(U) To this chapter is entrusted the mission of examining the impact of reduction of United States (US) forces from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) on US military activity in Southeast Asia (SEA).

APPROACH

(U) Examination focuses on the following major areas:

- Pre-1969 US consideration of disengagement from Vietnam;
- Early efforts to strengthen the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF);
- Concept of Vietnamization;
- President Nixon's decision to begin significant US troop redeployments based on criteria designed to govern the pattern and pace of such redeployments;
- Salient features of each redeployment increment from the summer of 1969 to the present;
- Influence of US political and economic considerations; and
- Illustrative methods devised by US commanders to minimize problems generated by troop redeployments.

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PRE-1969 US CONSIDERATION OF DISENGAGEMENT

(U) Commencing with the Kennedy administration, withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam became a topic of interest in various quarters. Reacting strongly to withdrawal sentiment, President Kennedy invoked the domino theory when he stated: "For us to withdraw from the effort would mean a collapse not only of South Vietnam but Southeast Asia. So we are going to stay there." Later, however, the President modified his position somewhat and stressed ultimate Vietnamese responsibility by stating: "It is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it, the people of Vietnam."¹

(U) At the United Nations on 27 September 1966, Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg commented as follows concerning withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam: "The United States stands ready to withdraw its forces as others withdraw theirs so that peace can be restored in South Vietnam, and favors international machinery . . . to ensure effective supervision of the withdrawal."²

(U) Continuing this theme on 4 November 1966, President Johnson set forth the US position regarding removal of Allied troops from the RVN:

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Our position is quite clear. We don't want to occupy that country . . . the seven participants in that conference [the Manila Summit Conference, 24 October 1966] felt that they wanted the entire world to know that if infiltration would cease, if the aggression would cease, if the violence would cease . . . the Allies would gladly reciprocate by withdrawing their troops, and that they would withdraw them in a period of not to exceed six months.³

(U) As time passed, dissatisfaction over the course of the war arose within various segments of the US public, and the Johnson administration came under growing pressure to end US participation in the conflict. Many Americans seemed not to know exactly what aims their government was pursuing, while others, professing total understanding of Vietnam policy, expressed varying shades of disagreement concerning its wisdom. Among the factors involved were:

- The tremendous financial burden caused by the war. Annual costs of US participation had increased steadily to almost \$22 billion in Fiscal Year 1969 (the peak year).⁴ These enormous costs had caused taxes to be raised and key domestic programs to be diluted or postponed.

- The length of the war and the number of US casualties. These areas perturbed not only those of "dovish" persuasion but many "hawks" who were beginning to feel that results attained were not commensurate with the amount of American blood spilled.

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- A growing feeling among many thoughtful Americans that, because of then existing draft deferment policies, the disadvantaged element of US youth, including those in racial minority status, was being forced to bear the brunt of the war while those young men of higher social and financial classes were able to avoid it.

- Anti-administration and anti-war influence exerted by various of the news media.

(U) Onto this scene burst the enemy's 1968 TET offensive whose shock effect, fanned by the "anti" media, caused many Americans to regard the war effort as futile. From within his own administration and from various of his closest advisors President Johnson was dissuaded from further major troop build up. Indeed, he announced on 31 March 1968 that he would not seek reelection and offered a partial halt to the bombing of North Vietnam (NVN) as an inducement to negotiations leading to peace and US unity. It was apparent that the US had taken a positive step toward winding down the war. A further step came on 1 November 1968 with total cessation of bombing.

PRE-1969 EFFORTS TO UPGRADE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
ARMED FORCES

(S) Although the US had been concerned indirectly with strengthening and upgrading the RVNAF during its support of the French - Viet

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Minh war, through the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina, its first direct efforts came during the latter part of 1954 in the wake of the Geneva Accords that signalled French military redeployment from Vietnam. To facilitate shifting of responsibility from French to US auspices, a combined organization entitled "Training Relations and Instruction Mission" (TRIM), composed of French and US personnel under Major General John W. O'Daniel, Chief MAAG, Indochina, was created early in 1955. With phase-out of French representation by the fall of that year, the US role from then until 1965 was limited to advising, training, and logistically supporting the RVNAF with the objective of guiding and assisting them until they were able to protect their nation without outside help.⁵

(S) By early 1963, progress in the development of RVNAF was evident, but the overthrow of President Diem and the subsequent period of political uncertainty and lack of direction in the government triggered a process of military deterioration. As coup followed coup, military commanders at various levels changed frequently, troop morale dropped, desertions increased and RVNAF effectiveness declined sharply. Several demoralizing defeats by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces in I and III Corps Tactical Zones

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(CTZ) compounded the situation. By early 1965 the situation was becoming critical.⁶ At this point came the pivotal US decision to introduce combat forces to forestall what was considered to be the imminent probability of Communist victory.

(S) With build up of its forces in RVN, the US concentrated its attention on military operations against the foe. The advisory program continued, but without benefit of equal emphasis and vigor. "The advisory effort . . . had become in reality US prosecution of the war."⁷

(U) Among programs stressed by General Westmoreland as Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), to upgrade RVNAF during the years 1966-1968 were:

- Developing leadership, both officer and NCO;
- Streamlining RVNAF administrative procedures;
- Raising troop morale by improving standards of living;
- Enhancing training to increase combat proficiency;
- Expanding the RVNAF force structure, to include implementation of an effective and enforced mobilization program;
- Equipping RVNAF with better weapons, especially the M16 rifle;⁸ and

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- Stressing need to keep combat units up to strength, even at sacrifice of expansion goals.

(U) Although progress was uneven and in some cases disappointing in terms of accomplishment, by late 1967 General Westmoreland was able to conclude that "the trend of development of the Vietnamese Armed Forces was such that, given additional modern equipment, they could progressively take over a larger part of the war."⁹ One notes in this statement the keystone of what later was to be termed "Vietnamization."

(U) Despite progress in improving and modernizing the RVNAF prior to 1969, there was yet no suggestion that the balance of opposing forces would enable the US to begin reducing its forces in RVN. However, in announcing a limited mobilization of reserves on 11 April 1968, Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford stated that the US troop ceiling in RVN would be 549,500 and that the Vietnamese forces eventually would begin to supplant some American troops in combat areas. Mr. Clifford added: "It might be that the American troops could be used elsewhere, that they could be drawn back into reserve."¹⁰ He did not say that American forces could be redeployed. Similarly, almost one year later, on 19 March 1969, Mr. Clifford's successor, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, stated after a trip to Vietnam:

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. . . I see no indication that we presently have a program adequate to bring about a significant reduction in the US military contribution to South Vietnam. The current operating assumption as stated to me is that even the currently funded modernization program for the South Vietnamese forces will equip them only to withstand the VC insurgents that would remain after all North Vietnam forces had been withdrawn to North Vietnam. Also, the presentation given to me by the MACV staff was based on the premise that no reduction in US personnel would be possible in the absence of total withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops. Our orientation seems to have been more on operations than on assisting the South Vietnamese to acquire the means to defend themselves.¹¹

PRESIDENTIAL REDEPLOYMENT DECISION

(U) On 20 January 1969, as the Nixon administration assumed office, the situation as seen through its eyes could be summarized in these terms (as recapitulated by the President):

- The war had been going on for four years;
- 31,000 Americans had been killed in action;
- The training program for the South Vietnamese Armed

Forces was behind schedule;

- 540,000 Americans were in Vietnam with no plans to reduce the number;

- No progress had been made at the negotiations in Paris;

- The US had not put forth a comprehensive peace proposal;

and

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- The war was causing deep division at home and criticism from many of our friends as well as our enemies abroad.¹²

(U) The announced aims of the Nixon administration were succinct: to stop the war in Vietnam and to terminate American involvement there.¹³ Three possible means by which the US aims could be obtained suggested themselves to President Nixon:

- The enemy might reduce his forces and/or the level of fighting in RVN;

- The Paris negotiations could lead to a ceasefire agreement;
or

- The RVN could be strengthened so that it could defend itself against the present Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) threats without major outside assistance.

With the third possibility appearing to offer worthwhile possibilities, late in February 1969 the President dispatched Secretary Laird to RVN to reexamine the South Vietnamese war effort and the training program for RVNAF.¹⁴

(S) At about the same time, General Abrams, by now having replaced General Westmoreland as COMUSMACV, announced in Saigon a three-faceted goal for 1969:

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. . . combat operations to defeat the enemy and promote security, increased effort to improve and modernize the RVN's armed forces, and a further emphasis on pacification and building the inchoate republic into a viable state. Each facet of this "one war" was to, and in fact did, receive equal attention.¹⁵

Although the three major goals of the "one war" concept were to be given equal attention and priority, the most important objective, the one with the highest payoff, was the pacification program. The success of pacification would dictate the degree of improvement necessary in the RVNAF to transfer to them functions and responsibility. It would indirectly determine the speed with which US forces would be withdrawn.¹⁶

(U) After the return of Secretary Laird, President Nixon stated that a new approach to our efforts to strengthen the Republic of Vietnam, termed "Vietnamization," provided the key to an honorable solution to the war and an end to US participation therein.¹⁷ If Vietnamization succeeded:

- The RVN would be able to defend itself against both NVA and VC forces;

- It would not matter if the Paris negotiations failed to produce a ceasefire; and

- The US could reduce its forces in RVN because they no longer would be needed.

(U) Secretary Laird later defined Vietnamization as follows:

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Vietnamization means a lot more than modernization of the South Vietnamese armed forces to permit their continuing assumption of more military responsibility. Vietnamization means the progressive transfer to the South Vietnamese of responsibility for all aspects of the war and management of their affairs; stronger government, stronger economy, stronger military forces, stronger police for internal security.¹⁸

(U) On 8 June 1969, at Midway Island, after discussion with President Thieu and General Abrams, President Nixon announced that training and equipping of RVNAF had been so successful that they could begin to replace US combat forces. Accordingly, he declared not only that he had decided on immediate redeployment of 25,000 US troops, but that three criteria would determine the pace of future redeployments:

- Progress in Vietnamization;
- Progress in the Paris negotiations; and
- Decrease in the level of enemy activity.¹⁹

US TROOP REDUCTIONS, 1969-1971

(S) When US redeployments began in the summer of 1969, Allied forces possessed a clear margin of superiority over the enemy in firepower, mobility and number of troops. In order to maintain the momentum of ongoing efforts and to insure maintenance of a prudent posture vis-a-vis the enemy during the period required to attain

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RVNAF improvement and modernization objectives, it was decided at Washington level to predicate future redeployment on periodic assessments prepared by COMUSMACV and studied at each higher echelon (a process later to be termed the "cut and try approach"). Although all three of the Presidential criteria were to be considered in the assessment process, absence of negotiating progress in Paris led to concentration on the enemy threat, status and performance of RVNAF and progress of pacification:

- Analysis of the NVA and VC threat included consideration of enemy infiltration rates, logistic activity, intensity and frequency of attacks, personnel gains and losses, reaction to US redeployments and use of sanctuaries in Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam (NVN).

- Appraisal of RVNAF included leadership, manpower availability versus requirements for activation of additional troop units, shift in the mission of ARVN units from support of pacification to operations against enemy main forces, development of territorial forces, combat performance of RVNAF in terms of activity and effectiveness, personnel management and morale supporting activities, intelligence, logistics, training and communications-electronics.

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- Assessment of pacification addressed progress achieved in strengthening territorial security, combatting terrorism (including neutralization of the VC infrastructure), expanding Peoples Self Defense Forces, improving local administrations, inducing enemy personnel to "rally" to the Government of Vietnam (GVN) (Chieu Hoi program), caring for and resettling refugees, expanding public information and advancing rural well-being, urban improvement and social development.²⁰

(C) Conclusions and recommendations associated with the periodic assessments were the product of judgment based on interplay of all factors, and were designed to facilitate redeployment decisions at the Washington level. In addition, they took cognizance of the political, economic and psychological climate within RVN. In time, as will be brought out later in the chapter, they required consideration of and were influenced by US political and economic developments.

(U) Redeployment Increment I, applicable to the period between 1 July 1969 and 31 August 1969, reduced the authorized US troop strength, or ceiling, in RVN by 25,000, from 549,500 to 524,500. Major units redeployed were the 9th Infantry Division (-) and the 9th Regimental Landing Team of the 3d Marine Division.²¹

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(U) Increment II, between 15 September 1969 and 15 December 1969, saw the ceiling lowered another 40,500 spaces, to 484,000. Major units redeployed were the remainder of the 3d Marine Division and the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division.²²

(U) Increment III, between 16 December 1969 and 15 April 1970, reduced authorized US troop strength by 50,000, to a new figure of 434,000. The bulk of the troops departed after the Tet holiday in the interest of maintaining existing Allied strength during that potentially dangerous period. Major units redeployed were the 1st Infantry Division, 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, and the 26th Marine Regimental Landing Team.²³

(U) On 20 April 1970, President Nixon announced that since progress in the Vietnamization program substantially had exceeded his original expectations, he was able to offer a longer-range withdrawal plan. Accordingly, he specified that 150,000 US troops would be redeployed through the spring of 1971²⁴ (subsequently defined as completion by 1 May 1971).

(U) Under Redeployment Increment IV, 50,000 of the 150,000 spaces cited by the President were redeployed between 16 April 1970 and 15 October 1970, dropping the authorized level to 384,000. Major units redeployed were the 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, 199th Light Infantry Brigade, and the 7th Marine Regimental Landing Team.²⁵

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(U) With Increment V, 16 October 1970 through 31 December 1970, the US troop ceiling was lowered by another 40,000 spaces to 344,000. Major units redeployed were the remainder of the 4th Infantry Division and the 25th Infantry Division (-).²⁶

(U) During the period 1 January 1971 through 30 April 1971, Increment VI featured a further reduction of 60,000, to a new level of 284,000. This fulfilled President Nixon's program announced on 20 April 1970. Major units redeployed were the 1st Cavalry Division (-), 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (-), and the 5th Marine Regiment.²⁷

(U) On 8 April 1971, the President announced a further withdrawal of 100,000 between 1 May and 1 December 1971, thus establishing the ceiling at 184,000.²⁸

(C) In connection with planning for and decisions concerning each redeployment increment, it is to be noted that appropriate coordination was effected between the US Government and the GVN, and between the US Government and Free World troop contributing countries. At both ambassadorial and military levels in Saigon, care was exercised to assure the GVN that the US was neither abandoning the Republic nor redeploying at a rate incommensurate with the planned pace of Vietnamization or insensitive to the time required by RVNAF to accept transfer of responsibility from US forces on an orderly basis.²⁹

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INFLUENCE OF US POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS³⁰

(S) Returning to the process of periodic assessments designed to facilitate redeployment decisions, it became evident at US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) level in mid-1970 that US political and economic considerations had, for all intents and purposes, supplanted the three Presidential criteria as the basis for redeployment decisions. As observed from MACV, this change exerted important influence on US and GVN military planning and on Vietnamization.

(TS) Underlying the change referred to above were decisions taken by the US administration with respect to the Fiscal Year (FY) 1971 budget and to the magnitude of draft calls for the latter portion of Calendar Year (CY) 1970 and early 1971. In each instance the decisions reflected pressure on the administration generated by increasing anti-war sentiment, mounting opposition to the draft and need to reduce the defense sector of the federal budget -- in part to permit funding of other programs; in part to reduce expenditures in connection with efforts to balance the budget. Congressional influence was manifest in connection with pressure to reduce defense expenditures.

(TS) Against this backdrop the FY 1971 budget provided, among other things, for reduction in the US troop ceiling in Vietnam from

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434,000 as of 15 April 1970, to 260,000 by the end of FY 1971 (30 June 1971) -- a more extensive draw-down than understood by those in Saigon, and, very significantly, a reduction of greater magnitude than discussed with and utilized in planning with the GVN at the highest levels. Additionally, it called for reduction in tactical air strike effort of 20,000 sorties per month at the beginning of FY 1971 to an average of approximately 14,000 during the ensuing year. B-52 sorties were to be reduced from 1,400 per month at the beginning of the fiscal year to 1,200 during the year.

(TS) Although the foregoing did not make its way through joint channels to MACV as guidance during the first half of CY 1970, various indications of a tightened defense budget for FY 1971 did surface in service channels. Secretary of the Army Resor, for example, during the course of a visit to Vietnam early in July 1970, placed heavy stress on need for optimum resource management during FY 1971. This same theme received strong emphasis from General Westmoreland when he visited Vietnam several days later. The Secretary also called attention to the fact that MACV's assessments and redeployment recommendations called for a slower rate of Army troop reduction than the Army itself was planning under the FY 1971 budget. He noted that this had the effect of requiring the Army to fund for more forces for a longer period than countenanced under the FY 1971 budget.

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(TS) Secretary Resor went on to underscore the Army's inability to overcome substantial manpower shortages within US Army, Vietnam, particularly those in infantry units wherein effectiveness had been reduced below desired standards and vulnerability to increased casualties had been heightened. It had been recognized by MACV in this case that action by the administration to reduce draft levies during the latter part of CY 1970 and the early part of CY 1971, coupled with failure of the Selective Service System to meet January, February and March 1970 draft calls, had imposed serious problems on the Army in connection with its efforts to erase the manpower deficit in Vietnam. Nonetheless, COMUSMACV had adhered to the position that the mission demanded full-strength maneuver units and that Army deficits should be eliminated. It was not, however, until early in August 1970 that MACV became aware of the acute nature and full ramifications of the Army's problem. In this instance, the facts were presented at Headquarters, United States Pacific Command and in Saigon by Lieutenant General Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, DA Staff, who journeyed to Vietnam with approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(TS) In brief, General Kerwin explained that the Army would face continuing trained manpower shortages through the summer of 1970 to January 1971, and that despite priority efforts to do so it could

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not restore deficits in Vietnam barring acceleration in the rate of redeployment of Army forces so as to narrow the gap between Army strength requirements in Vietnam and the Army's ability to meet those requirements. Although MACV wished to retain a higher level of Army forces in Vietnam for a longer period than would be possible under the Army formula, ultimately it accepted modification of the redeployment schedule for Army forces and altered the timing of Marine Corps redeployments to assist in meeting the Army's manpower problem.

(TS) May and June of 1970 witnessed US-GVN incursion into the enemy's Cambodian sanctuaries. As these highly important operations came to a close, planning guidance reaching MACV through the joint channel reflected strong accent by the administration on need to portray successes attained by the operations and to exploit the demonstrated increase in RVNAF confidence, experience and morale stemming from the operations as a basis for efforts aimed at accelerating Vietnamization. Results of this approach were seen to be a speed-up in troop redeployment, reduction in US casualties and progressive lowering of the heavy burden of war costs. Planning guidance increasingly reflected the theme that Vietnamization not only is linked to the Nixon Doctrine, but inevitably will be used to measure the latter's validity and success.

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EFFECTS OF US REDEPLOYMENTS

(C) As US troop strength declined, the RVNAF assumed increasingly greater responsibilities. Although there was continuing risk that the RVNAF could become overextended or overcommitted in the process, care was exercised to guard against this possibility. Moreover, it became apparent that US redeployments were having a beneficial effect on both the GVN and the RVNAF who realized they had to produce and who discovered that they were able to do so. As early as February 1970, even skeptical American newsmen found clear evidence of improvement in the combat efficiency, leadership and aggressiveness of RVNAF, although admittedly there remained areas wherein significant progress was lacking.³¹

(C) Reference has been made earlier to demonstrated increase in RVNAF confidence, experience and morale stemming from the US-GVN operations into the enemy's Cambodian sanctuaries in May and June of 1970. To expand on this point, it became clear as the GVN forces continued their campaigning in Cambodia following withdrawal of US units by the 30 June deadline established by President Nixon, that the operations had provided a dramatic boost to Vietnamization through their positive contribution to increased pride, know-how and overall effectiveness of the participating forces. Of equal importance, however, is the fact that the strong feeling of

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competence, strength and accomplishment on the part of the participating forces (who were continuing to tie down major enemy forces, thereby reducing pressure that otherwise would be felt within the Republic itself) carried over to non-participating forces countrywide. In his address to the nation on 3 June 1970, President Nixon forecast these developments by noting the contribution being made by the operations in buying time for RVNAF improvement and in strengthening the morale of GVN forces.³²

(C) A further outgrowth of the Cambodian operations is found in the strong degree to which both leaders and men became imbued with belief in their ability to meet the test of combat. Increasingly they manifested greater willingness and competence to undertake difficult operations, and proved themselves progressively more effective in battle. Of vital importance in this connection was their increasing capability to undertake operations on a unilateral basis and with reduced levels of US combat support and advisory assistance. Beyond RVN's borders they operated, and continue to operate, without US advisors.

(S) By the end of 1970, performance of the expanding Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) compared favorably with corresponding US air Force units. The competence and professionalism of the VNAF were

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evident particularly during operations in Cambodia.³³ Also by year's end, the Vietnamese Navy (VNN), having become one of the ten largest in the world, had assumed responsibility for the bulk of the coastal surveillance and inland waterway operations formerly carried out by US Navy forces alone or working in conjunction with VNN elements.³⁴

(S) As the number of US maneuver battalions decreased, US ground operations declined in number and scope. Furthermore, with significantly fewer maneuver forces, the US command found itself less capable of influencing the action on the ground. To compensate for this anticipated development, it relied increasingly upon fire-power--artillery, gunships and tactical air--for this purpose. Insofar as redeployments are concerned, this produced need to reduce ground, and to a lesser degree, carrier based tactical air at a slower pace than for ground forces. In relation to optimum use of US and RVNAF resources, the redeployment pattern witnessed retention of substantial US Army combat support assets, particularly lift helicopters, gunships, air cavalry and artillery, to support ARVN.

(U) In keeping with directive guidance from the Secretary of Defense that US ground combat forces would be withdrawn from combat by 1 May 1971 (subsequently changed to 1 July 1971), it became evident that US Army combat units could expect to assume the primary

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mission of security of US bases.³⁵ With attainment of this posture, remaining effort on the part of all US forces could be foreseen as support of RVNAF on a decreasing scale during the final phase of its growth and development, plus what could be described as "dynamic base defense." For planning purposes, the US troop reduction program is visualized as culminating in a residual military assistance advisory group charged with facilitating continued RVNAF progress in Vietnamization.

(U) With reduction in US troop strength and corresponding decrease in US ground operations, US battle casualties declined steadily. As Secretary Resor stated on 12 October 1970, "In the first nine months of 1970, US casualties have been reduced to less than one-half of what they were during the same period in 1969."³⁶

(U) Decline in American troop morale incident to force reduction became a principal concern to the US command.³⁷ It was an unfortunate paradox that this problem stemmed, at least in part, from the success of the Vietnamization program. As US forces turned over the burden of active fighting to the RVNAF and accelerated redeployments, a predictable ebb in morale could be discerned.

- Racial clashes, combat refusals and both attempted and successful attacks on officers and noncommissioned officers by disgruntled personnel increased.

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- Apprehensions for drug abuse rose sharply in 1970, with heroin addicts accounting for five to ten percent of those apprehended.³⁸

(U) Part of the problem could be traced to relative inactivity and boredom; troops were being challenged by considerably less fighting and support of fighting than before. As one soldier, comparing his previous tour with his present one, put it: "It was different last time. There was a war on then, and Charlie was kicking up some hell. There wasn't time to be hassling us about keeping boots shined and laying off 'grass'." ³⁹ Another source of irritation was the fact that as redeployments proceeded, many housing and recreational facilities were consolidated or closed, making living conditions more difficult for troops staying behind.⁴⁰ Still another exacerbating factor was loss of a sense of mission among elements of US troops remaining in RVN.⁴¹ Newsweek magazine saw fit to aggrandize this factor into a general finding by stating on 11 January 1971: "Few soldiers still believe in the war."⁴² Certainly some soldiers just arriving manifested lack of understanding of why they were needed under circumstances in which forces were being redeployed. Others evidently misunderstood official US Government pronouncements. On 31 May 1971, for example, Iver Peterson reported in The New York Times that many soldiers "believed that they would not have to

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go into the field after May 1st when they read reports that Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird had set that date for the end of American combat operations."⁴³ As one rifleman put it, according to US News & World Report: "We're getting out anyway. So why should I be the last man killed in this no-good war?"⁴⁴ This since has gained prominence as the "last man" syndrome.

(U) With decrease in combat activity, amounting in many cases to a complete lull, along with a corresponding decline in US casualties, carelessness and loss of alertness made their appearance. Two events in the spring of 1971 illustrate the consequences.

- The first occurred on 28 March, when enemy sappers successfully penetrated the perimeter of Fire Support Base Mary Anne under cover of a mortar attack and killed 33 Americans.⁴⁵

- The second occurred on 23 May at Cam Ranh Bay--long considered one of the least vulnerable US installations in RVN--when enemy sappers slipped through the perimeter defenses and blew up some 1.5 million gallons of aviation fuel.⁴⁶

(U) Commenting on these incidents, General Abrams is reported to have stated: "There is a climate now which is the same as when we were approaching V-E Day in World War II. An atmosphere begins to prevail, and with it comes a certain amount of laxity. It takes a herculean effort to keep alertness up; it just requires a lot of attention."⁴⁷

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(U) In extension of COMUSMACV's accent on command emphasis in dealing with morale and disciplinary problems generated by redeployment, a number of remedial programs were adopted.

- On 28 October 1970, General Abrams, supported by higher authority, approved a new leave policy which granted US military personnel one 14-day leave during a normal RVN tour and permitted travel to Continental United States (CONUS) if desired. The 14-day leave was additive to the normal six-day "R&R" (rest and recreation) for which all personnel were eligible. US airlines were quick to support the new program, offering round-trip charter flights to the CONUS during that month.⁴⁸ Subsequent assessment supports the conclusion that the policy has been beneficial in its relevance to morale and discipline.

- Through command channels and information media, personnel were encouraged to take advantage of both the normal six-day out-of-country R&R program and the three-day in-country R&R program.

- A religious retreat center was opened at Cam Ranh Bay to fulfill the needs of soldiers desiring spiritual reflection, rededication and strengthening.

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- US Army, Vietnam, instituted a command-wide sports program exploiting the challenge of small unit competition at installation level as well as country-wide championships. Illustrative of this undertaking was action on the part of an infantry battalion commander in the 1st Cavalry Division who devised a series of competitions in military arts plus a "winter olympics" in which companies competed in softball, volleyball, riflery and comparable activities.⁴⁹

- In August 1970, a drug abuse task force was formed at Headquarters, MACV in an attempt to identify key factors and to establish corrective measures. Conclusions of the task force were embodied in MACV Directive 190-4, published in December 1970. Among other things, the directive established an expanded drug suppression program to be coordinated by MACV.⁵⁰ All command information media were enlisted in support of the program. Pacific Stars and Stripes, for example, was utilized to inform troops of the dangers of narcotics addiction. This campaign, called "Cold Turkey," evoked a favorable response as evidenced by requests for copies of materials made available by the newspaper. Under Department of Army auspices an amnesty program was instituted to afford the drug user freedom to seek treatment and rehabilitation without incurring penalties established by the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

- In May 1971 formal representations were made by the US Government to the GVN on need for meaningful GVN "crack-down"

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on widespread narcotics trade--more particularly, on smuggling of narcotics into RVN.⁵¹ This initiative resulted in positive action on the part of President Thieu who, in addition to manifesting understanding of the drug problems confronting US forces, was impressed by the magnitude of financial loss occasioned by corruption within his customs service. Results of the GVN offensive necessarily await future assessment.

- In addition to educational and rehabilitative measures, the drug suppression program included an intensified enforcement campaign. Dogs trained to detect marihuana were employed to good effect, as was screening of packages introduced into the postal system. "Pushers" became the object of concerted effort aimed at their apprehension and prosecution.

- Control of weapons and ammunition, especially in rear areas where the danger of enemy ground attack was relatively slight, was tightened in furtherance of efforts to reduce "fraggings" and comparable attacks against officers and noncommissioned officers.

- To combat general relaxation and loss of alertness, General Abrams directed his commanders to re-emphasize combat fundamentals in their units and to devote their attention to insuring that personnel were alert and wary at all times.⁵²

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CONCLUSIONS

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(U) Reduction of US forces from RVN stems from a deliberate political decision by the US administration to achieve an honorable solution to the war and to terminate US participation therein.

(TS) Political, economic and psychological pressures have affected both US-GVN military planning and US troop redeployments. Prominent among the influencing factors have been desire on the part of the US administration to reduce casualties and to lower the cost of the war, in the latter case as reflected by budgetary cuts based on decisions largely divorced from the enemy threat and military recommendations.

(U) Within the framework of Vietnamization, US troop redeployments have had a salutary effect on the RVNAF which came to realize it had to produce.

(U) With winding down of the war and reduction of US forces from Vietnam, various problems relating to decline in morale, alertness and discipline have tested the US command. Major emphasis has been accorded development of programs to cope with this situation and to overcome the problems involved.

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CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

"This war is the most difficult war any army has ever fought. Certainly, it is the most difficult war any Army of the United States of America has fought. Because this is the first time in our history when we have had a lack of understanding of why we are here, what the war is all about, where we have had real division at home."

President Richard M. Nixon, Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division,
Di An, RVN, 30 July 1969.

(U) Salient conclusions developed by each chapter are summarized below.

Chapter I - Rules of Engagement

(U) Nonmilitary considerations have exerted strong, continuing and generally restrictive influence on ROE governing conduct of ground, sea and air operations in SEA. Broadly speaking, ROE have affected military operations in SEA by:

- Frustrating the application of air power against NVN,
- Preventing adequate ground engagement of enemy base areas and LOC in sanctuaries, including the DMZ,
- Reducing the effectiveness of air interdiction of the enemy's base areas and LOC, and

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- Increasing the vulnerability of friendly forces.

(U) During the 1965-71 period, ROE as utilized in SEA moved in the direction of improving the effectiveness of US military forces, while at the same time insuring maximum protection for noncombatants and civilian property.

(U) ROE pertaining to the DMZ have continued to place US-GVN forces at a disadvantage by restricting them primarily to defensive reaction to enemy offensive initiatives.

Chapter II - Free World Military Assistance Forces

(U) The "more flags" concept produced additional forces to confront aggression in the Republic of Vietnam, thereby strengthening the anti-communist front of the Free World. However, unilateral political and economic factors, plus constraints imposed by the principal Free World troop contributing countries on the employment of their forces, has diminished their effectiveness. Allied command and control arrangements that have evolved in RVN have provided a reasonable, though not wholly satisfactory, basis for coordination and cooperation among all Free World elements within the limits established by political facts of life.

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Chapter III - The Buddhist Uprising in 1966

(C) Although the GVN emerged from the Buddhist crisis of 1966 considerably strengthened politically and psychologically, the crisis had a temporarily detrimental effect on the war effort, particularly in the I Corps Tactical Zone. During the crisis, both United States and Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces were forced to turn their attention from exerting maximum pressure on the enemy.

Chapter IV - Effect of Truces on United States and Allied Operations

(U) The enemy has yet to honor in full a truce in Vietnam. Conversely, he consistently has used truce periods to enhance attainment of political and military objectives. US and allied forces have been placed at a military disadvantage during these periods. Over the years, however, the pattern of enemy violations has produced heightened vigilance and pre-planned countermeasures on the part of friendly forces with resultant lessening of disadvantage.

(U) The enemy's truce violation at the outset of Tet 1968 was a major strategic error on his part -- one that constituted precisely the "Pearl Harbor" needed to rally the South Vietnamese people.

(U) With the exception of their use in prisoner of war exchanges, truces have been politically motivated and militarily unjustifiable.

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Chapter V - Policies Governing the Use of Air Power

(U) Both strategic and tactical air -- the latter in its reconnaissance, airlift and strike roles -- have contributed in major degree to fulfillment of allied objectives in SEA. Employment of air power in SEA has been most effective in RVN by virtue of fewer restrictions imposed on air operations in that country.

(TS) Political constraints, notably in the realm of targetting policy, have prevented fully effective and sustained application of air power against the enemy in NVN and Laos.

(TS) Beginning in FY 1970, budgetary decisions have been responsible for progressive decline in availability and effectiveness of US air power in SEA. These decisions have had only marginal relevance to the enemy threat and to military requirements presented by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC.

Chapter VI - Prior Proposals for and the Limited Incursion into Cambodia

(U) US political restrictions on conduct of operations against the Cambodian sanctuaries during the 1964 - May 1970 period enhanced the enemy's combat and logistic posture, placed allied forces in RVN at decided intelligence and operational disadvantage, and produced unnecessarily heavy friendly casualties, military and civilian, over an extended period.

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(S) Divergence of professional judgment on the nature and extent of VC/NVA supply activity in Cambodia as between COMUSMACV and Washington level intelligence agencies served to delay decisions in support of the military's quest for authority to counter enemy exploitation of Cambodia.

(U) Opposition by segments of the US public and the Congress to the US-RVN incursions into the enemy's Cambodian base areas affected decisions on the depth of penetration by US forces of the sanctuary complex, duration of operations by US forces and prohibition against reentry of US ground units into Cambodia following termination of the incursion.

Chapter VII - Prisoner of War Issue

(U) Although the status of prisoners of war, particularly that of captured US pilots, has generated intense public concern, motivated official and private initiatives designed to improve the situation, and prompted development of a sophisticated PW recovery mechanism, it has exerted only minor influence on the conduct of military operations in SEA.

Chapter VIII - Reduction of United States Forces

(U) Reduction of US forces from RVN stems from a deliberate political decision by the US administration to achieve an honorable

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solution to the war and to terminate US participation therein.

(TS) Political, economic and psychological pressures have affected both US-GVN military planning and US troop redeployments. Prominent among the influencing factors has been desire on the part of the US administration to reduce casualties and to lower the cost of the war, in the latter case as reflected by budgetary cuts based on decisions largely divorced from the enemy threat and military recommendations.

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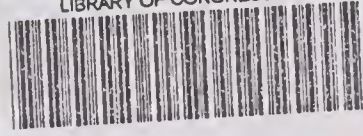
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